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A

Syſtem of Divinity,

in

A COURSE of SERMONS,

on the

FIRST INSTITUTIONS of RELIGION;

On the BEING and ATTRIBUTES of GOD;

on ſome of the moſt important

ARTICLES of the CHRISTIAN-RELIGION,

in Connection;

And

On the ſeveral Virtues and Vices of Mankind:

with Occaſional Diſcourſes.

Being a Compilation from the beſt Sentiments of the polite Writers, and eminent, ſound Divines, both ancient and modern, on the ſame Subjects, properly connected, with Improvements, particularly adapted for the Uſe of chief FAMILIES and STUDENTS in DIVINITY; and for CHURCHES, for the Benefit of Mankind in general.

Volume XII.

By the Rev'd Wm DAVY. A. B.

LUSTLEIGH, DEVON.

Printed by Himſelf. —— Fourteen Copies only,

MDCCC.

A

System of Divinity,

in a

COURSE of LECTURES

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Articles of the Christian Faith,

in

On the several Virtues and Graces of Mankind;

with Occasional Discourses.

Being a Compilation from the last Sentiments of Primitive Writers,
and a Comparison between their Sentiments and those
of the Writers of the Church of England.

By the Rev. A. H.

London: Printed by Dilly.

MDCC.

SERMONS

on

the ſeveral Virtues

and

Vices of Mankind.

"Cry aloud, ſpare not, lift up thy Voice
"like a Trumpet, and ſhew my People their
"Tranſgreſſions, and the Houſe of Jacob
"their Sins." *Iſaiah.*

"Ceaſe to do Evil: — Learn to do well."
Iſaiah.

"Abhor that which is Evil: — Cleave to
"that which is Good." *Paul.*

"Add to your Faith Virtue." *Peter.*

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Againſt Extortion, Injuſtice, Oppreſſion, &c. &c.

Luke xviii. 11. "Extortioners, Unjuſt."

It is not my Deſign here to ſpeak of Injuſtice in that high Degree of it as exerciſed in the open Violation of the Laws of Mankind, in depriving them of the Property of their Goods by Theft and Robbery: This will fully juſtify a Place by itſelf: But only to ſpeak of thoſe leſſer Acts of Injuſtice, too often in Practice among us; [viz.]

Of malicioufly hurting the Perſons, or Properties of others.

Of accepting the Perſons of Men, in the Adminiſtrations of Juſtice.

The not being faithful to our Truſts, nor true to our Promiſes.

The with-holding juſt Dues.

The not doing the Labour of our Hire, — Over-reaching

(*) A Diviſion being made in the Tenth Sermon, upon Reviſal in this Place, is here allowed for.

reaching in Trade, – taking Advantage of the Ignorant, the Neceſſitous, and Needy; – or proſecuting, in Law, or otherwiſe, with Rigour and Severity.

In all which, Men are but too prone, and generally glory in the Greatneſs of their Iniquity.

All theſe appeared ſo odious in the Eyes of a Phariſee, that he made it Matter of Thankſgiving to God, that he was not guilty of them, "I thank God that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjuſt."

But, — Without attempting here a Vindication of the WHOLE Character before us, as it was purpoſely introduced to ſhew a Groſſneſs of Defect in another Point; it is hoped that People, profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, will need not many Arguments to deter them from it.

It is very ſeldom, but that, in the worſt of Characters, ſome good Qualities are to be found intermixed. (*) It is our Duty therefore in all theſe Caſes to ſelect the one from the other; and as we avoid the Evil of their Doings; (†) ſo, "Whatſoever things are

(*) Every Man has ſomething good in his Compoſition, which may be improved by Cultivation and Diligence.

(†) *Inſpicere, tanquàm in Speculum, in Vitas omnium jubeo, et ex aliis ſumere Exemplum ſibi. Hoc facito, et hoc fugito; hoc Laudi eſt, et hoc Vitio datur. Felix, quem faciunt aliena Pericula cautum.* Sl

are honeſt, juſt, lovely, and of good Report; if there be any Virtue or Praiſe in them, theſe we are to think of," imitate, and follow. — And,

Firſt, The firſt Character of Injuſtice, (as already mentioned,) is endeavouring to hurt, or damage maliciouſly, either the Perſons or Properties of others.

The Malice of this Injuſtice appears, where no Intereſt or Profit can follow to the Perſon who takes a Pleaſure to hurt, damage, or deſtroy the Goods of a Neighbour whom they hate: an Action which moſt nearly reſembles the continual Practice of the Devil, to undo others without doing himſelf any Advantage; but much exceeding him in Wickedneſs, for as much as he only envies Creatures of another Nature; whereas the malicious Man perſecutes thoſe of his own.

"Deviſe not Evil, therefore, againſt thy Neighbour, ſeeing he dwelleth ſecurely by thee." "Enter not into the Path of the Wicked, and go not in the Way of evil Men; – avoid it, paſs not by it, turn from it, and paſs away; for they ſleep not except they have done

Si quid in aliis dedecorat, vitemus et ipſi.

By other's Faults Wiſe-Men correct their own.

That is good Ground that bears a good Crop, no Matter in what Climate it lies. We ſhould imitate Good whereſoever we find it, tho' among Turks, Jews, Infidels, or Hereticks; and abominate Evil, tho' in the neareſt Relation. Serm. CCI.

done Miſchief; and their Sleep is taken away unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall." (*)

This Vice is one of the "SEVEN Things" taken notice of by Solomon as an Abomination to the Lord [viz] "An Heart that diviſeth wicked Imaginations, and Feet that be ſwift in running to Miſchief." — But,

2dly, A ſecond Character of Injuſtice (as already mentioned,) is the "accepting the Perſons of Men in the Adminiſtrations of Juſtice;" (i.e) the perverting what is right through Favour or Affection, or extending the due Prerogative for Tranſgreſſion through Ill-will or Diſlike. In both which Caſes, the Man who is guilty of it, is unjuſt. "That which is altogether right ſhalt thou do, ſaith the Lord, and in no Way ſhalt thou pervert Juſtice or Judgment before me, I am the Lord."

To be placed as the Executioners of Juſtice is a great Truſt, in the Diſcharge of which, if Men are biaſſed by Favour, or Intereſt, or drawn aſide from the Conſideration and Regard of the public Good, and govern by Paſſion or Partiality, it is a far greater Crime, and of worſe Conſequence, than any private Act of Injuſtice whatever.

Whether

(*) "He that deviſeth to do Evil, ſhall be called a miſchievous Perſon." "It is Sport to a Fool to do Miſchief." "Folly is Joy to him that is deſtitute of Wiſdom." "He that ſoweth Wickedneſs, ſhall reap Vanity."

Whether Judgment be paſſed through Favour or Fear, (*) in Exceſs of Paſſion or Severity; (‡) in both Caſes, Truth is injured, Authority abuſed, Equity

(*) *Iniquus eſt Judex, qui aut invidet, aut favet; debet enim in Judicio imbecillis eſſe Invidia. Amor et Odium, et proprium Commodum, ſæpè faciunt Judicem non cognoſcere Verum. Judicem nec pro juſtis orandum, nec pro injuſtis exorandum; hoc enim eſt a Juſtitiâ decedere. Ut Sol non alius eſt Pauperi, quàm Diviti, ſed omnibus communis; Ità Judex non debet ſpectare Perſonam, ſed Rem. In Judicio ſemper attendite Merita Cauſarum, non Perſonarum; non Munera, ſed Jura; non quod Voluntas affectat, ſid quod Ratio dictat; non quod Mens cupiat, ſed quod ſentiat; non denique quod libeat, ſed quod liceat.*

"The tender in Heart is turned from his Purpoſe by Supplications; whilſt the Proud is rendered more obſtinate by Intreaty: Whereas, the Senſe of thine Inſufficiency commandeth thee to hear; but to be juſt, thou muſt hear without thy Paſſions."

Paris, propter Æquitatis Famam, a Diis electus Judex Pulchritudinis, Malum aoreum, inſcriptum his Verbis, Detur Pulcherimæ; *Veneri addixit, non Junonis Majeſtate, non Palladis Sapientiâ allectus, contrà quam ſentiret, Sententiam ferre. Judices iniqui errant a Veritate Sententiæ, dum intendunt Qualitatem Perſonæ, et exulcerunt ſæpè juſtos, dum improbè defendunt iniquos.* — "It is not good to have Reſpect of Perſons in Judgment; for, for a Peice of Bread that Man will tranſgreſs."

"He that ſaith unto the Wicked, Thou art righteous; him ſhall the People curſe, Nations ſhall abhor him: but to them that rebuke him ſhall be Delight, and a good Bleſſing ſhall come upon them. Every Man ſhall kiſs his Lips, that giveth a right Anſwer."

(‡) *Præjudicata Opinio Judicium obruit. Ad pœnitendum properat, qui citò judicat; in judicando, criminoſa eſt Celeritas. Ut qui incedit lentè, certius incedit; ità, qui in judicando deliberat, juſtius pronunciat. Qui properat Judicio, pravam ſæpè fert Sententiam. Bis audito, bis conſideranto, et plus duplo melius reſpondebis.* Serm. CCI.

He

quity perverted, and the public Security endangered, by weakening thoſe Motives which do, and which ſhould influence private Conduct.

The Integrity of the Diſcharge of all other relative and ſocial Duties of Life will much depend on the Example of that Integrity with which judicial Proceedings are determined; and, if either real Offences are deſignedly overlooked, or groundleſs Accuſations unfairly countenanced; either Way, the Miſchief will extend far beyond the ſingle Inſtance, and will embolden the Progreſs of Wickedneſs, and diſcourage a faithful Adherence to unbefriended Honeſty. (*)

It was a Command under the Law, and its moral Obligation will be ever in Force, "Ye ſhall do no Unrighteouſneſs in Judgment; thou ſhalt not reſpect the Perſon of the Poor, nor honour the Perſon of the Mighty; but in Righteouſneſs ſhalt thou judge thy Neighbour." "He then that ruleth over Men muſt be juſt, ruling in the Fear of God;" he muſt "deliver

"He that giveth Anſwer to a Matter before he hath heard it, lacketh Wiſdom." "Anſwer not before thou haſt heard the Cauſe; neither interrupt Men in the midſt of their Talk." — See Note (‡) Vol. viii. Page 177. — Give none by haſty Judgment Cauſe to grieve;
Love without Intereſt; without Fear forgive.

(*) Judges ought to be more learned than witty, more reverend than plauſible, and more adviſed than confident; above all things, Integrity is their Portion and proper Virtue.

"deliver him that ſuffereth Wrong, from the Hand of the Oppreſſor, and not be faint-hearted when he ſitteth in Judgment – he muſt be as a Father to the Fatherleſs, and inſtead of an Huſband to their Mother, ſo ſhall he be as the Son of the Moſt-High, who will love him more than his Mother doth." – "Accept no Perſon, then, againſt thy Soul, and let not the Reverence of any Man cauſe thee to fall." – "Make not thyſelf an Underling to a fooliſh Man, neither accept the Perſon of the Mighty" – "Strive for the Truth unto Death, and the Lord ſhall fight for thee" For "he that juſtifieth the Wicked, and he that condemneth the Juſt, even they both are an Abomination to the Lord."

"Sayeſt thou that Juſtice cannot be executed without Wrong? ſurely thine own Words condemn thee. Thou who flattereſt with falſe Hopes the Criminal, that he may confeſs his Guilt; art not thou unto him a Criminal? or is thy Guilt the leſs, becauſe he cannot puniſh it.

"When thou commandeſt to the Torture, him, who is but ſuſpected of ill, dareſt thou to remember, that thou mayeſt wrack the Innocent?

"Is thy Purpoſe anſwered by the Event? Is thy Soul ſatisfied with his Confeſſion? Pain will force him to ſay what is not, as eaſy as what is; and An-

guiſh hath cauſed Innocence to accuſe herſelf.

"That thou mayſt not kill him without Cauſe, thou doſt worſe than kill him: That thou mayeſt prove if he be guilty, thou deſtroyeſt him innocent.

"O Blindneſs to all Truth! O Inſufficiency of the Wiſdom of the Wiſe! Know, when thy Judge ſhall bid thee account for this, thou wilt wiſh ten thouſand Guilty to have gone free, rather than one Innocent then to ſtand forth againſt thee."

But further, — Another Inſtance of Injuſtice, is, "the not being faithful to our Truſts, nor true to our Promiſes." — And,

Firſt, Of Breach of Truſt. He that deceives a Man in any Truſt that is committed to him, is guilty of a great Injuſtice, and that the moſt treacherous; and differs in Degree according to the Circumſtances committed to him.

If a Matter of Arbitration in a Cauſe, Executerſhip of a Will, a Factor or Aſſignee, or the keeping of a Pledge, be the thing for which our Fidelity ſtands engaged; if, by Neglect, we ſuffer any of theſe Truſts to miſcarry, we are diſhoneſt & unjuſt. If, for a Bribe, we betray the Truſt committed to us, or convert it to our own Advantage, we are more infamouſly guilty than if we had robed by open Violence: becauſe, in this Way, we make uſe of that Truſt to betray the Intereſt

tereſt of our Friend, by which we were as eſpecially oblidged to ſecure and defend it, as if we had exchanged Perſons, and his Intereſt was our own. To betray a Perſon for our own Advantage, when he has made us next his own Perſon in Power, is diſingenuous Perfidioufneſs and Injuſtice.

If the Fortunes of Children, and Gifts bequeathed to pious Uſes, and to relieve the Neceſſities of the Needy, where God and the Poor are immediately concerned, be the Matter in Hand, and theſe are withheld, or prodigally embezzled, whoſoever doth this, is in the higheſt Degree, guilty of the Vice before us.

This is both Impiety and Sacrilege, and muſt therefore give the Offender a Title to all thoſe Curſes that attend theſe ſeveral Vices: and, however human Laws may be leſs ſevere, & make it more difficult to puniſh them; yet in Conſcience, and in the Sight of God, it is truly an Increaſe and Aggravation of the Guilt, as being a double Injuſtice. Solomon, therefore, adviſes us, "not to enter into the Fields of the Fatherleſs; for their Redeemer is mighty; and he will plead their Cauſe with thee;" – particularly charging us, "not to remove the old Land-mark, and that "it is a Sin to devour that which is holy."

And even, as to leſſer Matters, it will by no Means avail us, if we are unfaithful in them, to ſay "Is it not a LITTLE?"

That wiſe Obſervation of our Saviour is here truly applicable: "He that is unjuſt in the leaſt, is unjuſt alſo in much."

The Reaſon, perhaps, why he is unjuſt only in a little, is, becauſe it is not in his Power to be more ſo; if it was, his evil Inclination would carry him to greater Lengths. One Act of Injuſtice naturally leads to others; the Reaſon for the ſecond is as good as the firſt; and the Temptation is ſtronger, the more we comply with it.(*) The Depravity of a wicked Man ſticks at nothing. (‡) There is no juſtifying therefore the leaſt Iniquity. — In great and plain Inſtances, the natural Senſe, indeed, of every Man's own Mind, neceſſarily makes him deteſt and abhor the Acts of Unrighteouſneſs of This Sort: The principal Caution needful, therefore, to be given in This Matter, is, that All Perſons would carefully beware of the firſt Beginnings of Injuſtice, and of being tempted to wrong their Neighbours in ſmall things, which they may perhaps very erroneouſly look upon as of no great Importance.

(*) The ſureſt Way to avoid great Sins, is carefully to abſtain from the leſs. *Incerti quo Fata trahunt, ubi ſiſtere detur.*

Principiis obſta, ſerò Medicina paratur
Cum Mala per longas invaluêre Moras.
Venienti occurrite Morbo.

(‡) *Improbi ne peream, perdunt.*

tance. For generally it is by being ſeduced at firſt into ſuch ſmaller Tranſgreſſions, that Men become hardened by Degrees, till at Length they run into the greateſt and moſt capital Offences. And!

When Men are once addicted hereto, how vilely proſtitute are they? they are neither fit for Counſel nor Friendſhip, for Service nor Command, for Office nor Honour; but, "like Salt that hath loſt its Savour, will be fit only for the Dunghill, to be caſt out and trodden under-foot of Men, and periſh for ever."

But, — Secondly, "Non-obſervers of our Promiſes." That which a Man hath brought upon him by voluntary Promiſe, he cannot, without great Injuſtice, with-hold; for, by This a Man is held as firmly as by any other Contract whatever; and ſurely, whoever fails herein, cannot be an Imitator of God, who "hath always been mindful of his Covenant and Promiſe, that he made to a thouſand Generations."

The Pſalmiſt, when making Mention of thoſe "who ſhall dwell in the Tabernacle of the Lord, and reſt upon his holy Hill," ſays, "Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt Life, and doth the thing that is right, and ſpeaketh the Truth from his Heart; — he that hath uſed no Deceit in his Tongue, nor done Evil to his Neighbour, nor taken Reward againſt the Innocent; he that ſweareth unto his Neighbour, and diſappoint-

eth him not, though it were to his own Hindrance."

"It is better, then, that thou ſhouldeſt not vow; than vow, and not pay;" for, to ſay afterwards, "it was an Error," will not be accepted either before God or Man. (*)

But further, — "With-holding juſt Dues." (‡)

The Chriſtian Laws require us to be fair and equal in all Contracts and Agreements, taking no Advantage of the Ignorance, the Weakneſs, or Neceſſities of our Neighbours — and to be punctual in making them good, not adhering to the bare Letter of Obligations, but fulfilling the mutual Intention, and calling our own Conſcience to evidence them, when there are no other Witneſſes. We are to "render to all their due," — not only Debts in Law, but in Equity and good Conſcience, (for there is no Difference between theſe two in Point of Religion,) are to be duly diſcharged; and that chearfully, without Compulſion; and readily, without Evaſion or Delay, to the utmoſt of our Power. And yet, how much of this Injuſtice is there among us, that we may rightly apply to ourſelves that Reproach of the Prophet, "The Spoil of the Poor is in your Houſes:" For, how can we call it by a better Name, when we ſee Luxury

(*) See Vol. viii. Page 370, &c. with the Diſcourſes 124, 125.

(‡) *Dives Æris alieni.*

Luxury in Dreſs and Equipage, and ſplendid Tables ſupplied from the Revenues of others, who are unmercifully kept out of their due Returns till they are ruined by ſupporting the Vanity of thoſe who deſpiſe them. — But,

The Goſpel teaches Chriſtians a far different Leſſon, "Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another." This is That One Debt, which we muſt at all Times owe, and that can never be finally diſcharged, and muſt therefore be always kept open — and the Good of it is, that it will ſecure all other Debts: for, He that owes Love to his Neighbour, will take care to owe him nothing but Love: (*) for "Love is the fulfilling of the Law."

A Man through Loſſes or Accidents may perhaps be ſo reduced as to be incapable of anſwering every juſt Demand; in this Caſe, Charity and Compaſſion, if not Forgiveneſs, have ample Room for Exerciſe. (‡) — But, Where

(*) *Rationes exæquando conſervat Amicitia.*
Bona Nomina, ſi non exigas, ſunt mala.

(*) Forgive poor Debtors: equal Pleaſure flows
To him who Mercy finds, or Mercy ſhows.

As to the Caſe of thoſe who have compounded with their Creditors for a ſmall Part, whether they be in Conſcience and Equity releaſed from the whole, we are tender to reſolve, being unwilling to lay

Where Men, through Exrtavagance, involve themſelves in Difficulties, or even deſignedly take of their Neighbours without Hope or View of Return, the

needleſs Burdens upon the Minds of Men: but yet, we ought to have a more tender Care of their Souls, than their Eſtates. Therefore, to deal plainly, and to diſcharge our Conſciencies in this Caſe, we think ſuch Perſons do, notwithſtanding the Compoſition, ſtand obliged in Equity & Conſcience for the whole Debt, and are bound to diſcharge it, as ſoon as they can with due Convenience. The Reaſon is, becauſe, tho they be diſcharged in Law, yet the Law does not intend to take off the Obligation of Conſcience or Equity, which they are under, but leaves That as before.

Thus the Caſe ſtands: Men, who are in a Way of Trade, are engaged, by the Neceſſity of their Calling, to venture a great Part of their Property in the Hands of others, and by this Means become liable many Times to be undone without their own Fault: therefore it is not unuſual, when any Man becomes diſabled, for the Creditors to make ſuch a Compoſition with him, as his Eſtate will bear, and upon this Compoſition, to give him a full Diſcharge; ſo that they cannot afterwards, in Law, demand the Remainder of their Debt.. Now,

Tho this is a Favour to the Debtor, yet it is principally intended for the Benefit of the Creditor, becauſe it being his Act, it is to be preſumed, that he intended it, as much as may be, for his own Advantage; and ſo it is, for the Creditor has as much Satisfaction at preſent as can be had, and the Debtor is left in a Capacity of recovering himſelf again by his Induſtry and Diligence, which could not be, if he was not fully diſcharged; for if he were ſtill liable for the reſt, he would continually be ſubject to Imprisonment, which would render him incapable of following his Calling; or if he were at Liberty, he could have no Credit to enable him to do any thing in his Calling; for who would truſt a Man with any thing, who is liable every Moment to have it taken from him?

So

the higheſt Name of Injuſtice is here too ſoft to expreſs their Characters, (*) and even the ſuffering them to "die the common Death of all Men," is too lenient for ſuch vile Impoſtors; for this is only in a different Manner the very ſame thing, as taking from him

So that the Reaſon of this plenary Diſcharge is this, that Men, who are otherwiſe hopeful, and in a fair Probability of recovering themſelves, may not be rendered incapable of getting an Eſtate afterwards, whereby they may ſupport themſelves, and diſcharge their Debts. Now this Diſcharge being given in Order to theſe Ends, it cannot be imagined that it ſhould be intended to defeat them; but it is in all Reaſon to be ſuppoſed, that the Creditors did not intend to take off the Obligation of Equity & Conſcience, but only to put the Man into a Condition of doing ſomething towards the enabling him to diſcharge his Debt. So that unleſs it were expreſſed at the Compoſition, that the Creditor would never expect more from him, upon any Account of Equity and Conſcience, but did freely forgive him the reſt, the contrary whereof is uſually done; unleſs it were thus expreſſed, there is no Reaſon why the Creditor's Favour in making a Compoſition ſhould be abuſed to his Prejudice; and why a legal Diſcharge, given him on Purpoſe for this Reaſon among others, to put him into a Capacity of recovering himſelf, and giving full Satisfaction, ſhould be ſo interpreted, as to extinguiſh the equitable Right of the Creditor to the Remainder of his Debt.

(*) Borrowing on fraudulent Securities, or falſe Repreſentations of our Circumſtances; or without Intention, or without proper Care afterwards, to repay; preferring the Gratification of our Covetouſneſs, our Vanity, our Voluptiouſneſs, or Indolence, before the ſatisfying of juſt Debts, all this is palpable Wickedneſs. — See Knox's Eſſays, No 98. on the Guilt of incurring Debts, without either a Proſpect or an Intention of Payment.

him by Force his preſent proper Poſſeſſion; and is no leſs than direct Robbery, or worſe; for they hereby deceive thro Appearance of Friendſhip, and leave the Deceived no adequate Means of Redreſs. And if, at any Time, any of theſe things be done under the Colour of Law, or in ſuch a Manner as to evade human Laws; yet the Crime is not thereby the leſs, but in Reality the greater; becauſe then, to the Sin of Injuſtice, there is an Aggravation added, in perverting the Means by which Public Juſtice ſhould be preſerved among Men. — Again,

The ſame Juſtice, which obliges Men to what has been already ſaid concerning Debts of their own contracting, calls upon every One to diſcharge thoſe Debts alſo, which either through Friendſhip for the Debtor, or on any other Account, they have made their own, by being bound for another, who is either incapable, or unjuſt enough to refuſe Payment.

It is true, the Caſe is hard with the Bondſman: but ſuppoſe the worſt, he cannot blame the Creditor for theſe Conſequences, whoſe Right cannot be ſuperſeded by any Act the Debtor can do, or any thing the Bondſman can ſuffer, till the Value received is duly and honeſtly reſtored. So that ſuch Misfortunes are ſevere Cautions for us never to enter into ſuch Engagements raſhly, or without good Grounds of Security

rity to ourſelves; but no Countenance for breaking them, on which the Creditor placed his chiefeſt Confidence, and therefore he muſt either be paid by that Means, or be cheated and betrayed. (*) — Again,

Another Way of with-holding juſt Dues, is Uncharitableneſs, or not relieving the Wants and Neceſſities of the Poor: and the Reaſon is, becauſe, in Scripture-account and Eſtimation of things, great Uncharitableneſs is a Sort of defrauding the Poor of the Means by which God intended they ſhould be ſupported. "With-

(*) *Cui fidas vide. — Fide-juſſorem infidum cave*; for, ſome are full of Oral Sanctity and Mental Impiety.

"A Man void of Underſtanding ſtriketh Hands, and becometh Surity in the Preſence of his Friend;" whereas, He is a wiſe Security, who ſecures himſelf - "He that is Surety for a Stranger ſhall ſurely ſmart for it; but he that hateth Suretiſhip is ſure.

Sponde, et propè eſt Damnum. Præter Pericula Obſes nihil lucratur. "Suretiſhip hath undone Many of good Eſtate, and ſhaken them as a Wave of the Sea: mighty Men hath it driven from their Houſes, ſo that they wandered among ſtrange Nations." - "Take his Garment that is Surety for a Stranger," - "If thou be Surety for thy Friend, if thou haſt ſtricken thy Hand with a Stranger; thou art ſnared in the Words of thy Mouth. — Do this now, and deliver thy Soul, when thou art come into the Hand of thy Friend: go, humble thyſelf, and make ſure of him. Give not Sleep to thine Eyes, nor Slumber to thine Eye-lids - Deliver thyſelf as a Roe from the Hand of the Hunter, and as a Bird from the Hand of the Fowler." — See the latter Part of No. 82. of the Spectator. — "Forget not the Suretiſhip of thy Surety, for he hath given his Life for thee."

"With-hold not Good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the Power of thine Hand to do it." – And,

Not only Charitableneſs to the Poor, but in general, all Kinds of equitable and merciful Proceedings whatſoever, are, in Scripture-language, included under the Notion of Juſtice: conſequently, the with-holding juſt Commendations, or the like, is a defrauding Men of their due: In this Senſe, Joſeph is repreſented as a JUST Man, (i.e) compaſſionate, unwilling to expoſe needleſsly even one whom he thought a guilty Perſon, to Reproach.

And if, in theſe Caſes, we are guilty of Injuſtice, in with-holding juſt Dues from Men; how much more ſo, when we with-hold the juſt Wages of the Servant, and the Hire of the Labourer, or give him too little for it. For, "the Bread of the Needy is his Life; he therefore that defraudeth him of it, is a Man of Blood: He that taketh away his Neighbour's Living, ſlayeth him; and he that defraudeth the Labourer of his Hire, is a Blood-ſhedder."

It is Solomon's Advice, "defraud not the Labourer of his Hire; for it is his Hope, and he ſetteth his Heart upon it; yea, give it him e'er the Sun goeth down, that he may bleſs thee: otherwiſe, if he cry unto me in the Bitterneſs of his Soul, I, the Lord, will hear him." By God's hearing him, we are to underſtand, redreſſing him.

The

The Complaints of thoſe that are thus injured, aſcend up to God. "Behold, (ſaith St. James,) the Hire of the Labourers, which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by Fraud, crieth; and the Cries of them that have reaped, are entered into the Ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth."

We have a ſtrict Command in this Matter: "Thou ſhalt not oppreſs an hired Servant that is poor and needy, at his Day ſhalt thou give him his Hire, neither ſhall the Sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and ſetteth his Heart upon it, leſt he cry againſt thee unto the Lord, and it be Sin unto thee:" for "a Prayer out of a poor Man's Mouth reacheth to the Ears of God, and his Judgment cometh ſpeedily."

"Do not think to corrupt with Gifts, for ſuch he will not receive; and truſt not to unrighteous Sacrifices, for the Lord is Judge, and with him is no Reſpect of Perſons. He will not accept any Perſon againſt a poor Man, but will hear the Prayer of the oppreſſed." — If not, therefore, for his Sake, at leaſt for our own, let us give as is due unto him. (*)

Again, — As Reaſon and the divine Laws do thus protect the Hireling and his Wages, ſo do they no leſs demand from him, in his Station, equal Strictneſs and Upright-

(*) See this Caſe, among others, more particularly ſpoken to, in the Diſcourſe on paying Debts, in this Work. Serm. CCI.

Uprightneſs, – That they perform "the Labour of their Hire honeſtly, not as Eye-ſervants, pleaſing Men only, but with Singleneſs of Heart, fearing God; knowing alſo that they have a Maſter which is in Heaven."

It is a great Abſurdity to expect that their Superiors ſhould be exact in Juſtice with them, whilſt they at the ſame Time are idle, are remiſs and careleſs, extravagant and unfaithful in all their Undertakings; unleſs it be the Severity of Juſtice, in puniſhing them according to their Deſerts. God, who will not ſuffer the labouring Man to be defrauded of his Hire, but declares that the Cry of ſuch Injuſtice aſcends up to him for Vengeance, does as much abhor any Fraud that is committed on the Labourer's Part.

SERMON CCII.

On the ſame Subject.

Over-reaching in Trade, &c.

Luke xviii. 11. "Extortioners, Unjuſt."

Beſides the Inſtances already given of Injuſtice, (as too commonly practiſed,) another is, "over-reaching in Trade." "It is Nought, &c. (under) ——

(*) "Preſents and Gifts blind the Eyes of the Wiſe, and ſtop up his

The hiding of Imperfections, or with-holding juſt Commendations, or over-rating either; — "diverſe Meaſures, a falſe Weight and a falſe Balance, theſe all are an Abomination to the Lord; for them that deal truly are his Delight, and he hates the thing that is Evil." The Command is expreſs, "if thou ſelleſt ought unto thy Neighbour, or buyeſt ought of thy Neighbour's Hands, ye ſhall deal truly, ye ſhall not oppreſs one another."

Bargains in buying and ſelling being a voluntary Exchanging of Intereſts, we owe this Duty one to another, to deal honeſtly in making and faithfully diſcharging

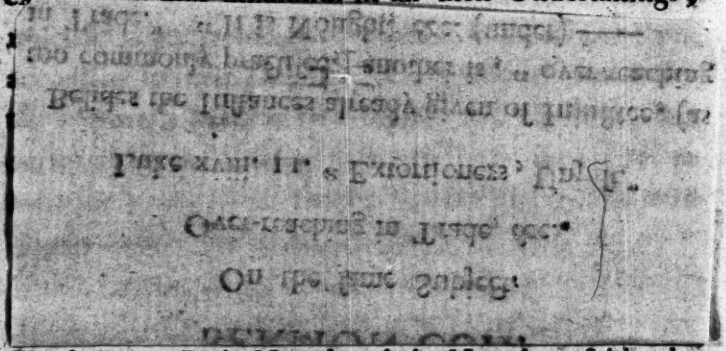
his Mouth, that he cannot reprove." No Faith is to be expected from him that will take Bribes: the firſt is but a Way to the ſecond, tho it claſheth with the former. — Therefore, diſcharge your Duty with Boldneſs of Mind, and be never biaſſed by any illicit Motive, for "all Bribery and Injuſtice ſhall be blotted out; but True-dealing ſhall endure forever." — He that can take a Bribe, makes his Honour and Integrity queſtioned; and, ſeems diſpoſed to take either Side, whether good or bad. Be it our Care, therefore, as we regard our Reputation, to ſhun ſo dangerous a Rock. — A firm Faith, and true Honeſty, are not to be forced by Neceſſity, nor corrupted by Reward.

Oh abſolvendum, Munus ni acceperis,
—— —— Sordent mihi Munera veſtra,
Et mihi pro vilo, ſub Pedibusque jacent.
Quid faciunt Leges, ubi ſola Pecunia regnat?
Aut ubi Paupertas vincere nulla poteſt?
Turpe Reos emptâ miſeros defendere linguâ,
Non bene cœleſtis Judicis Arca patet.

Herm. CCI.

Uprightneſs, — That they perform "the Labour of their Hire honeſtly, not as Eye-ſervants, pleaſing Men only, but with Singleneſs of Heart, fearing God; knowing alſo that they have a Maſter which is in Heaven."

It is a great Abſurdity to expect that their Superiors ſhould be exact in Juſtice with them, whilſt they at the ſame Time are idle, are remiſs and careleſs, extravagant and unfaithful in all their Undertakings;



Trade." "It is Nought, it is Nought, ſaith the Buyer; but when he is gone, he boaſteth."

Whereas, — An honeſt Man's Dealings are open unto all Men: as he with-holds no juſt Commendations, ſo neither doth he hide any Imperfections; he reſtores the over-ſeen Gain of a falſe Reckoning, and eſteems a Bribe venemous, (*) tho it comes gilded over with the Colour of Gratuity. The

(*) "Preſents and Gifts blind the Eyes of the Wiſe, and ſtop up his

The hiding of Imperfections, or with-holding juſt Commendations, or over-rating either; — "diverſe Meaſures, a falſe Weight and a falſe Balance, theſe all are an Abomination to the Lord; for them that deal truly are his Delight, and he hates the thing that is Evil." The Command is expreſs, "if thou ſelleſt ought unto thy Neighbour, or buyeſt ought of thy Neighbour's Hands, ye ſhall deal truly, ye ſhall not oppreſs one another."

Bargains in buying and ſelling being a voluntary Exchanging of Intereſts, we owe this Duty one to another, to deal honeſtly in making and faithfully diſcharging

his Mouth, that he cannot reprove." No Faith is to be expected from him that will take Bribes: the firſt is but a Way to the ſecond, tho it claſheth with the former. — Therefore, diſcharge your Duty with Boldneſs of Mind, and be never biaſſed by any illicit Motive, for "all Bribery and Injuſtice ſhall be blotted out; but True-dealing ſhall endure forever." — He that can take a Bribe, makes his Honour and Integrity queſtioned; and ſeems diſpoſed to take either Side, whether good or bad. Be it our Care, therefore, as we regard our Reputation, to ſhun ſo dangerous a Rock. — A firm Faith, and true Honeſty, are not to be forced by Neceſſity, nor corrupted by Reward.

Ob abſolvendum, Munus ne acceperis.

—— —— Sordent mihi Munera veſtra,
Et mihi pro vilo, ſub Pedibusque jacent.
Quid jacitur Leges, ubi ſola Pecunia regnat?
Aut ubi Paupertas vincere nulla poteſt?
Turpe Reos emptâ miſeros defendere linguâ.
Bene bonâ cœleſtis Judicis Arca patet.

Serm. CCI.

charging our Engagements. So deliberate or contrived Fraud is in itſelf a Crime of the deepeſt Malignity, and of the moſt pernicious Conſequence: a Sin which tends to deſtroy all human Society, all Truſt and Confidence among Men, all Juſtice and Equity, which is the Support of the World, and without which no Society of Men can ſubſiſt. And the breaking thro this Obligation by deliberate Fraud, is, of all other Sins, one of the moſt open Defiances of Conſcience, and the moſt wilful Oppoſition to right Reaſon, that can be imagined. For a Chriſtian, therefore, a Man that profeſſes a pure and more holy Religion, a Religion that commands not only common Juſtice and Equity, but ſingular Love and Good-will towards our Neighbour, to be guilty of a contrived and deliberate Fraud, which the Conſcience even of a good Heathen would abhor; this is a greater Aggravation of the Crime: becauſe, as the End of Buying and Selling is to furniſh one another with the Neceſſaries and Conveniencies of Life; both the Buyer and the Seller hath a Right proper to them, ſo to buy and ſell, as that the Buyer may have the Worth of his Price, & the Seller the Worth of his Commodity: for otherwiſe, inſtead of mutually aſſiſting, we muſt neceſſarily oppreſs each other. (*) Therefore,

(*) *Omnia pactionda, ut ne quid omnino quod Venditor norit, Emptor ignoret.*

Therefore, — Notwithſtanding it may be a difficult Matter to determine nicely what the exact Meaſure is, which in Buying and Selling ought to be obſerved between Man and Man; yet in all Caſes, when Opportunity of Dealing preſents itſelf, it is but aſking ourſelves, How we would be dealt by in the ſame Circumſtances? And our Anſwer to that, is our Duty to thoſe we deal with. — In a Word,

In the various Scenes of Life there are ſo many Arts and Opportunities of Deceit, that a Man had need fence himſelf with a very firm Reſolution, nay, Love of Juſtice, or he will be in Danger of falling into Temptation; (*) But moſt, if not all of them, are

ignorant. Every thing ſhould be fairly told, that the Buyer may not be ignorant of any thing, that the Seller knoweth: whereas, "a Merchant ſhall hardly keep himſelf from doing Wrong; and an Huckſter ſhall not be free from Sin;" for, "as a Nail ſticketh faſt between the Joinings of the Stones, ſo doth Sin ſtick cloſe between Buying and Selling." "Gold hath been the Ruin of many; It is a Stumbling-block unto them that ſacrifice unto it; and every Fool ſhall be taken therewith. Bleſſed is the Rich that is found without Blemiſh, who hath been tried thereby, and found perfect; who might offend, & hath not offended; or done Evil, and hath not done it."

(*) A great Variety of Caſes will occur, in which, as a fair and honeſt Diſpoſition may give Proof of its Integrity; ſo he who has a Tendency to Double-dealing, will find Opportunities in Abundance to deceive himſelf, as well as thoſe that deal with him. He will have a thouſand Apologies to alledge, and be able to raiſe Arguments in

are ſo manifeſtly Sins, that the leaſt Reflection is enough

his own Defence, which it may require ſome Skill to anſwer, and yet but little Honeſty to deſpiſe: for, certain Truths are eaſier to underſtand and feel, than to explain. And if we can but once bear to deliberate, and reaſon about a profitable Villany, the Odds are great that we conclude at laſt to commit it; for, from wiſhing to believing, the Diſtance, we know, is not great. — *Ut nos ſæpè fallit pro Subſtantiâ Umbra; ità, in Vitâ quotidianâ Fraus pro Fide.*

Sic avidis fallax indulget Piſcibus Hamus:
Callida ſic ſtultas deſcipit Eſca Feras.
Grave eſt Malum Omne quod ſub Aſpectu latet.

Craft is commonly repaid with Craft, and he that thinketh to deceive another, is many Times deceived himſelf. All Deceits are proper to a baſe and bad Mind, but to be deteſted of an honeſt Man.

There is no better Antidote againſt Deceit, than Caution. *Qui non fallit, non fallitur. Qui Inſidias timet, rarò circumventus eſt; nec citò perit Ruinâ, qui Ruinam timet; ſemper enim metuendo, Sapiens vitat Malum. Cavendo tutus.* — Fear is a good Watchman, but a bad Defender.

It is a mighty Inprudence to neglect the weighing of all the Circumſtance of an Action, both as to Time and Place, before we venture upon doing what perhaps we may repent of in the Event.

This is generally the Wiſdom of the World: when a thing is over, we are as wiſe as Experience can make us.

Quandoquidem accepto claudenda eſt Janua Damno.
Serò ſapiunt Phryges. —— *Ictus Piſcator ſapit.*

When Death is at the Door, Remedy is too late: and when Misfortune is happened, Thought of Prevention is bootleſs. Almoſt all the Miſcarriages of Mankind are for Want of thinking: After-wit is commonly dear bought, and we pay for it either with Misfortune, Anxiety, or Sorrow; for there is no unthinking a Misfortune after it has befallen us for Want of Precaution and Foreſight. An After-thought

will

nough to make any one ſenſible, how much he is bound conſcientiouſly to avoid them. And he, who deſires to preſerve himſelf innocent, eaſily may.

Another Inſtance of Injuſtice mentioned, was, the taking Advantage of the Ignorant, the Neceſſitous, and Needy, "Extortioners, Unjuſt."

We find theſe elegantly taken-notice of in Wiſdom, "Let us oppreſs the poor righteous Man, let us not ſpare the Widow, nor reverence the ancient gray Hairs of the Aged" – "Let our Strength be the Law of Juſtice; for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth."

But, In this there is nothing to boaſt of, theſe being an eaſy Prey to any who have the Baſeneſs to oppreſs them: but great Men deſpiſe ſuch mean Attempts.

Under this we may reckon, beſides the over-rating things to the needy, (a Vice too common in the World,) the demanding exorbitant Intereſt for lending to ignorant or thoughtleſs Perſons; or to extravagant Ones, for carrying on their Extravagance; (*) or to neceſſitous

thought may enhance our Trouble, but cannot relieve our Diſtreſs; it may prevent the like Inconvenience for the future, but it cannot make any Satisfaction for what is paſt. — See Knox's Eſſays, No. 128 on ſome of the falſe Pretenſions and Impoſitions of the Artful and Avaricious.

(*) That Affluence is a Bleſſing, (where the Almighty hath given

neceſſitous Ones, whoſe Neceſſities it muſt continually increaſe, and make their Ruin, after a while, more difficult to retrieve, and more hurtful to all with whom they are concerned. The Scripture hath particularly forbidden it in the laſt Caſe, and enjoined a very different Sort of Behaviour. (*) We

both an Heart and Opportunity to make a proper Uſe of it,) is undoubted; but that Riches may prove a Curſe to the Poſſeſſors of them, when improperly applied, is, doubtleſs, as true. The unthinking Youth, who is left by opulent Parents in a State of Independence, without ſuitable Adviſers, and under no Reſtraint from Conſcience, Reaſon, or Religion, muſt be accounted an Object worthy of Compaſſion and Aſſiſtance by the diſcerning Part of Mankind: and thoſe that would take Advantage of the Thoughtleſſneſs, Extravagance, Ignorance, or Credulity of a Young Man, in the above Situation, muſt ſurely deſerve Abhorrence and Contempt; and ſhould they ever ſucceed in their Attempts to ruin the Unwary and Imprudent, Say, O ye impartial and judicious Few, what Puniſhment is too great! and what Ignominy too public and reproachful for ſuch Peſts of Society.

The various Temptations which Young Men in Affluence are expoſed to, from deſigning Villains, evidence the Neceſſity of their daily Circumſpection, Prudence and Watchfulneſs; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that their very Age and Situation are too commonly the Inlets to theſe vile Intruders, like the Captivating Beauties of the Fair, which, while they are the Admiration of all around them, ſerve only to endanger them the more, and render them the Objects of the Snares and Machinations of treacherous Seducers.

"He that by Uſury and unjuſt Gain increaſeth his Subſtance, ſhall gather it for him that will pity the Poor."

(*) Lev. xxv. 35, &c. He who makes Advantage of another's Neceſſities, adds Oppreſſion to Miſery; which is not only Injuſtice, but Cruelty. — However, In

We are at a loſs for Words to deſcribe, here, the Character before us; what Deformity of Aſpect! what Complication of Wickedneſs! – what Want of Tenderneſs, and Bowels of Compaſſion, muſt conſtitute him.

In Order to obviate all Objection from the here recited Paſſage, in Reſpect to the taking of lawful Uſury and Increaſe - it may be neceſſary to obſerve, that the Judiciary Parts of the Law were thoſe that related to the Jews, as they were a Society of Men to whom God, by a ſpecial Command, gave Authority to drive out and deſtroy a wicked Race of People, and to poſſeſs their Land, which God appointed to be divided equally among them, and that every Portion ſhould be a Perpetuity to a Family; that, tho it might be mortgaged out, for a Number of Years, yet it was afterward to revert to the Family.

Upon this Footing they were firſt ſet, and they were ſtill to be preſerved upon it, ſo that many Laws were given them as a Civil Society, which cannot belong to any other; and therefore their whole Judiciary Law, except where any Parts of it were founded upon Moral Equity, was a complicated thing, and can belong to no other Nation, that is not, in its firſt Inſtitution, made and formed as they were. For Inſtance, The Prohibition, of taking Uſe for Money, (as in the preſent Caſe,) being a Means to preſerve that Equality which was among them, and to keep any of them from becoming exceſſively rich, or others from becoming miſerably poor. This is by no Means to be applied to other Conſtitutions, where Men are left to their Induſtry, and neither have their Inheritance by a Grant from Heaven, nor are put, by any ſpecial Appointment of God, all upon a Level.

So that it is certain, and can bear no Diſpute, that the Moſaical Diſpenſation, as to all the Parts of it, that are not, in their Nature, moral, is determined and abrogated by the Goſpel. The Deciſions which the Apoſtles made in this Matter, are ſo clear, & for the Proof of them, the whole Tenor of the Epiſtle to the Galatians, and the Hebrews, is ſo full, that no Doubt can reſt concerning them, with any One who reads them.

him, who can take Pleaſure in diſtreſſing the Diſtreſſed, and taking Advantage of the Needy, the Weak, and Ignorant!

No Wants can raiſe the Value of things, neither will the Imperfections of one Man juſtify Craft and Knavery in another.

Oppreſſion of the Poor, (to ſay nothing of the Inhumanity of it,) is highly provoking to God, as it reflects Diſhonour upon his Providence. "He that oppreſſeth the Poor, reproacheth his Maker."

This may be explained in two Senſes. He that oppreſſeth the Poor, reproacheth the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God; as if he had made Man, and then taken no Care of him, by a proper and competent Proviſion for the Support of the Life he had given him. — Or,

2dly, It may be, as Man is created in the Image of God, he that cruſheth the Poor, or inſults and treats him with Contempt, as if he were a Creature of a different Species from himſelf, offers an Affront and Indignity to God, in the Perſon of Man. Job makes this a Reaſon, why in his greateſt Proſperity, he did not deſpiſe the Cauſe of his own Servants, even when they contended with him. "Did not He who made me in the Woomb, make them? And did not one faſhion us together?"

We

We are commanded not to oppreſs the Poor, for this very Reaſon, "Becauſe he is poor."

Very and exceeding ſinful, therefore, muſt it be in any Man to make This a Reaſon of oppreſſing them, which God has made, and which is, in its own Nature, a ſtrong Reaſon, why they, in particular, ſhould be protected from all Manner of Oppreſſion.

The Guilt hereof is great, and accordingly God hath threatened that he will as ſeverely puniſh it: "He that hath oppreſſed the Poor, and hath ſpoiled by Violence, ſhall ſurely die, his Blood ſhall be upon him."

"God will not accept any Perſon againſt a poor Man, but will hear the Prayer of the Oppreſſed."

"He will not deſpiſe the Supplication of the Fatherleſs, nor the Widow when ſhe poureth out her Complaint. Do not the Tears run down the Widow's Cheeks? And is not her Cry againſt him that cauſeth them to fall? — The Prayer of the Humble pierceth the Clouds: and till it come nigh, he will not be comforted; and will not depart till the Moſt-High ſhall behold to judge righteouſly, and execute Judgment." — "For the Lord will not be ſlack, neither will the Mighty be patient towards them, till he have ſmitten in ſunder the Loins of the Unmerciful, and repayed Vengeance to the Heathen; till he have

taken away the Multitude of the Proud, and broken the Sceptre of the Unrighteous — till he have rendered to every Man according to his Deeds, and to the Works of Men, according to their Devices — till he have judged the Cauſe of his People; and made them to rejoice in his Mercy." — Indeed,

The Sovereign of the Univerſe characteriſes himſelf in the ſacred Writings, as peculiarly an Adverſary to the Inſolent and Haughty.

"For the Oppreſſion of the Poor, and for the Sighing of the Needy, now will I ariſe, (ſaith the Lord,) and will ſet him at Safety, from him that puffeth at him." — "Nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Advice of Solomon, therefore, is excellent: "Rob not the Poor, becauſe he is poor, neither oppreſs the afflicted in the Gate; for the Lord will plead their Cauſe, and ſpoil the Souls of thoſe that ſpoil them." (*)

"What is the Hope of an Oppreſſor, then, when God takes away his Soul? will God hear his Cry when Trouble cometh upon him?" And yet, "This," we are aſſured, "is the Portion of the wicked Man with God, and the Heritage of Oppreſſors, which they ſhall receive of the Almighty."

(*) See Note (*) Vol. x. Page 353.

An

An unjuſt Man, then, who for ſome trifling and inconſiderable, or even for the greateſt Advantages of this World, has endangered the Loſs of his Soul, would then, no Doubt, give all the World, were he Maſter of it, for the Teſtimony of Innocence and a good Conſcience; or for one Beam of the Light of God's Favour and Countenance to ſhine upon him. (*)

Another Defect, as already mentioned, is "proſecuting or perſecuting in Law, or otherwiſe, with Rigour and Severity;" (i.e) unjuſtly or needleſsly; or when in ever ſo neceſſary a Law-ſuit we occaſion unneceſſary Expences, or contrive unfair Delays; in ſhort, when any thing is done by either Party, in Subornation (‡); or falſely, by the Conſel that plead, or adviſe in the Cauſe; or by Judge or Jury, who determine it, contrary to real Juſtice and Equity.

But, Beſides all theſe Inſtances of Injuſtice, there are many more that are frequent, in all Kinds of Contracts.

(*) A little Wrong done to another, is a great Injury done to ourſelves. The ſevereſt Puniſhment of an Injury, is the Conſcience of having done it; and no Man ſuffers more than he that is turned over to the Pain Repentance.

(‡) *Ille qui Hominem provocat ad Juramdum, et ſcit eum falſum juraturum eſſe, ſæpe eſt Homicidiâ; quia Homicidia Corpus occidit, Ille Animam, imò duas Animas; et ejus Animam quem jurare provocat, et ſuam.* Serm. CCI.

tracts. Making Agreements, that we know are too hard; or inſiſting rigidly on the Performance of them, after they appear to be ſo; (*) making no Abatements when unexpected Loſſes, or other Alteration of Circumſtances call for them: nor inquiring into the Grounds of Complaints, when there is a Likelihood of their being juſt; (†) throwing unreaſonable Burthens upon others, merely Becauſe we know they muſt bare them: (†) keeping them to the very Words and Letter of an Agreement, contrary to the equitable Intention of it; or, on the other Hand, alledging ſome Flaw or Defect in Form, to get free from an Agree-

(*) Right, in Strictneſs, is not Right, if there be Equity on the other Side. We may be juſt without Rigour. Juſtice without Temperance, is Cruelty. Juſtice is a Mean between Exceſs and Defect. Juſtice without the leaſt Mercy is Injury; and the Extremity of Right is Injuſtice. *Summum Jus eſt ſumma Injuria.* Gospel, & all his Cases of Conscience are determined by the Statute. The Guilt of being *unfortunate*, is never to be defended by the beſt Advocate; all he can ſay or do, will be received with Prejudice by an uncompaſſionate Creditor. ——— *Turpia Lucra*

Fœnoris, et velox Inopes Uſura trucidat.
Citius Uſura currit, quàm Heraclitus.

"He that buildeth his Houſe with other Men's Money, is like one that gathereth himſelf Stones for the Toomb of his Burial."

"The Rich ruleth over the Poor, and the Borrower is Servant to the Lender."

(†) Might ſhould not prevail before Right. — To give Will and Power for Reaſon, is contrary to Reaſon.

Agreement, which ought to have been ſtrictly obſerved: — all theſe things are grievous Oppreſſions. And, tho ſome of them may not be in the leaſt contrary to Law, yet they are utterly irreconcilable with a good Conſcience: and ſometimes the greateſt Iniquities may be committed under their Authority, and by their Means. (*)

To ſee the Rich, therefore, and Great, in theſe or any other Ways, bear-hard upon the Poor, is inhuman; and, it is truly as little, if at all leſs ſo, when the lower Sort of People, are unmerciful, (as they but too often are,) one to another. For "a poor Man, that oppreſſeth the Poor, is like a ſweeping Rain, which leaveth no Food."

Upon the Whole, — Juſtice is concerned in the Obſervance of thoſe Laws, whether of God or Man, which Reſpect the Rights of Men, and their mutual Intercourſe with one another; that we uſe Honeſty and Integrity in all our Dealings, in Oppoſition to Fraud and Deceit; — Truth and Fidelity, in Oppoſition to Falſehood and Breach of Truſt; — Equity and a good Conſcience, in Oppoſition to all Kinds of Oppreſſion and Exaction whatever. But,

There is no Neceſſity to proſecute theſe things particularly:

(*) See Note (*), Page 32. Serm. CCI.

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(‡) The Man who wants Mercy, makes the Law of the Land his Goſpel, & all his Caſes of Conſcience are determined by his Attorney. The Guilt of being *unfortunate*, is never to be defended by the beſt Advocate; all he can ſay or do, will be received with Prejudice by an uncompaſſionate Creditor. ——— *Turpia Lucra*

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(*) See Note (*), Page 32. Serm. CCI.

ticularly: for, it is not Inſtruction or Skill, that is requiſite; but rather, on the contrary, "Simplicity and godly Sincerity," the Reverſe of "fleſhly Wiſdom." An honeſt Mind is the beſt Inſtructor, and will teach us beyond a thouſand Caſuiſts. "It is Joy to the Juſt to do Judgment." (*) He who truly loves that which is juſt and equal, and from his Heart deſires another's Welfare as his own, may be depended on; & he alone: he has a Principle within him, a ſecret Power, that will be an infallible Director; and turn him true and ſure to the Point of Right, amidſt all the Darkneſs of Diſputation, and all the Attraction of Self-intereſt.

Thus great and comprehenſive is the Duty of Juſtice; and the Injuſtice of its contrary and oppoſite Vices, is evident from that Averſion we all have to be thus dealt with ourſelves, and from thoſe inward Feelings, which we experience when the like befals us, & we are circumvented and oppreſſed by others. It is directly oppoſite to that Golden Rule of "doing to others as we would they ſhould do unto us," and is owing to a bitter Root within us, [viz.] a Diſtruſt of God, – Unfeelingneſs to our Fellow-creatures, – and a Diſcontent with our preſent Condition.

Need I uſe Arguments more, or are theſe inſufficient? Nay; whoever are Perpetrators of theſe things, can in no Way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:

(*) *Prædas objurat iniquas.* for

for "therein nothing enters that defileth, that maketh a Lye, or uſeth Deceit."

"Envy thou not the Oppreſſor, then, and chuſe none of his Ways; for the Froward is an Abomination to the Lord, but his Secret is with the Righteous. The Curſe of the Lord is in the Houſe of the Wicked; but he bleſſeth the Habitation of the Juſt. Surely, he ſcorneth the Scorner, but giveth Grace unto the lowly. The Wiſe ſhall inherit Glory, but Shame ſhall be the Promotion of Fools." — To Conclude,

"The Peace of Society dependeth on Juſtice, the Happineſs of Individuals on the ſafe Enjoyment of all their Poſſeſſions.

"Keep the Deſires of thy Heart, therefore, within the Bounds of Moderation, and let the Hand of Juſtice lead them aright.

"Caſt not an evil Eye on the Goods of thy Neighbour; let whatever is his Property be ſacred from thy Touch.

"Let no Temptation allure thee, nor any Provocation excite thee to lift up thy Hand to the Hazard of his Life.

"Defame him not in his Character, neither bear thou Falſe-witneſs againſt him.

"Corrupt not his Servant to cheat or forſake him, and the Wife of his Boſom, O! tempt not to Sin!

"It will be a Grief to his Heart which thou canſt not relieve, an Injury to his Life which no Reparation can atone.

"In thy Dealings with Men be impartial and juſt, and do unto them as thou wouldeſt they ſhould do unto thee.

"Be faithful to thy Truſt, and deceive not the Man who relieth upon thee; be aſſured it is leſs Evil in the Sight of God to ſteal than to betray.

"Oppreſs not the Poor, and defraud not of his Hire the labouring Man.

"When thou ſelleſt for Gain, hear the Whiſperings of Conſcience, and be ſatisfied with Moderation; nor from the Ignorance of the Buyer make any Advantage.

"Take no Advantage of the Ignorance, the Neceſſity, or the Prodigality of any Man; (*) for that Gain can never be bleſſed.

"Pay the Debts which thou oweſt, for he who gave thee Credit, relied upon thy Honour; and to with-hold from him his Due, is both mean and unjuſt.

"Finally, O Son of Society! examine thy Heart, call Remembrance to thy Aid; and if, in any of theſe things,

(*) The Man who is rightly honeſt looks not to what he might do, but to what he ſhould.

things, thou findeſt thou haſt tranſgreſſed, take Shame and Sorrow to thyſelf, and make ſpeedy Reparation to the utmoſt of thy Power."

Sermon

SERMON CCIII.

On Juſtice, the Oppoſite of Extortion, Injuſtice, &c.

Iſaiah. lvi. 1. "Thus ſaith the Lord, Keep ye "Judgment, and do Juſtice."

The Word, JUST, or JUSTICE, is of the ſame general Import, as RIGHTFOUS or VIRTUOUS; expreſſing, not the Performance of a PARTICULAR Duty, but the habitual Practice of Virtue in GENERAL. Thus in Matt. "At the End of the World, the Angels ſhall ſever the Wicked from among the Juſt:" The Meaning is GENERAL, They ſhall ſeparate the Bad from the Good. Again, in Gen. "Noah was a JUST Man;" The Senſe is; He was a virtuous and religious Perſon, one who feared God and kept his Commandments; For ſo his Character is more at large drawn in the ſame Verſe. (*) In like Manner, in Heb. "Ye are come to the general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born which are written in Heaven, to the Spirits of JUST Men made perfect:" The Meaning is; to the Company of all the righteous and good

(*) Gen. vi. 9.

Men,

Men, who have lived and died in the Fear of God, and the Practice of Virtue and true Holineſs, in all Ages and Nations of the World.

The Reaſon why Univerſal Virtue and Goodneſs is thus frequently repreſented under the PARTICULAR Name of JUSTICE, is becauſe Juſtice is ſo great, ſo ſubſtantial, ſo important a Part of true Religion, that, (by a Figure of Speech very uſual and obvious in numberleſs other Places,) a Part, ſo conſiderable, is eaſily & naturally put for the Whole; (*) and imports our rendering to every One his Due, whatever Relation we bear, or however we are indebted, to him; and in this Senſe, it comprehends our Whole Duty to God, our Neighbour, and Ourſelves, and is compoſed of the Virtues of Piety, Charity, and Temperance.

But Juſtice, generally, and in this Place particularly, (which I ſhall here only conſider,) is taken in a more limited Senſe, as a Branch only of ſocial Duty; and

(*) Religion conſiſts principally of two great Branches; the Love of God, and of our Neighbour: and, as *loving* or *fearing* God, ſignifies uſually the ſame in general, as being truly religious; becauſe whoever has a juſt Senſe of God upon his Mind, will not eaſily be prevailed upon to do Wrong to Men: So being a Juſt Man, is likewiſe commonly put for being perfectly and entirely religious; becauſe whoever ſo loves Virtue, as to do always what is Right to Men, will not eaſily be defective in his Regards to God, the ſupreme Lover and Encourager of all Righteouſneſs and Virtue. Serm. CCIII.

and ſignifies our rendering what is due to every Man, when conſidered in a Civil Capacity; or, in Reſpect to his Property, or his Actions, as a Member of a Community. The Text hath Reference to both theſe.

"Keep ye Judgment, and do Juſtice."

In treating further upon the Subject propoſed, I ſhall,

First, Deſcribe the Nature of this Virtue of Juſtice, and the Particulars of which it conſiſts, and the Bounds to which this Obligation extends.

II. The Neceſſity of the Practice of it, and the Benefits thence naturally ariſing to Mankind, with the Folly and Miſchief of its Oppoſite, Injuſtice.

III. The Conſiderations inducing to the Practice of it. And,

Laſtly, Inculcate the Doctrines, and point out the Uſes reſulting from the Whole. And,

First, Of the Nature of Juſtice, and the Particulars of which it conſiſts. — As Man is made for Society, we muſt of Neceſſity have various mutual Intercourſes with each other. And, as theſe Intercourſes are by WORDS and ACTIONS, ſo Juſtice requires that in the (under) former Idea of any One Virtue excluſive of others, but impoſſible

poſſible to conceive Juſtice abſtracted from all, or any of the reſt. (*) It is a Virtue, comprehending in itſelf a Syſtem of Duty, eminently diſtinguiſhed by the Name of the Social Virtue. And,

The

(*) There is no Virtue, the Honour whereof gets a Man more Credit, than that of Juſtice; becauſe it procures great Authority among the Common People; becauſe of its continual and common Uſe. They only revere the Valiant, and admire the Wiſe, while they truly love Juſt Men; for in theſe they have an entire Truſt and Confidence; but of the Former, they always fear the One, and miſtruſt the Other. They look on Valour, as a certain natural Ferment of the Mind, and Wiſdom as the Effect of a fine Conſtitution; but a Man has it in his Power to be juſt, and this is the Reaſon it is ſo diſhonourable to be otherwiſe.

Of all the Virtues, Juſtice is the beſt:
Valour without it is a common Peſt:
Pirates and Thieves, too oft with Courage grac'd,
Shew us how ill that Virtue may be plac'd;
'Tis our Complexion makes us Chaſt and Brave,
Juſtice from Reaſon, and from Heav'n we have;
All other Virtues dwell but in the Blood,
This in the Soul, and gives the Name of Good.

The Grecians eſteemed Juſtice above any other Virtue, becauſe it is the Foundation of Life; for, "without Confidence in each other, as to ſome Kind of Juſtice, (as Tully obſerves,) the Life even of Robbers and Pirates is incapable of being carried on." A juſt Diſtribution of Prey is abſolutely neceſſary among them; and Thieves, who are Enemies to Juſtice, will follow no Captain whom they think without it. *Fundamentum Juſtitiæ eſt Fides. Omnes boni Viri Æquitatem amant.* It is the ſtrongeſt Bond of all Society. *Libra juſta Juſtitiam ſervat.* Serm. CCIII.

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former we ſhould have a ſtrict Regard to Truth, and in the latter, to Righteouſneſs. We muſt render to every One his Due. And what that is may be pretty eaſily known. For, among the great Virtues on which the Ancients and, &c. ☞ (under)

cients and Moderns have written, none has been preferred to Juſtice, or more accurately diſcuſſed.

It is confeſſedly the moſt extenſive, and therefore the more immediately embraces and comprehends the other Virtues. Indeed, it is difficult to form a diſtinct Idea of any One Virtue excluſive of others, but impoſſible

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All other Virtues dwell but in the Blood,
This in the Soul, and gives the Name of Good.

The Grecians eſteemed Juſtice above any other Virtue, becauſe it is the Foundation of Life; for, "without Confidence in each other, as to ſome Kind of Juſtice, (as Tully obſerves,) the Life even of Robbers and Pirates is incapable of being carried on." A juſt Diſtribution of Prey is abſolutely neceſſary among them; and Thieves, who are Enemies to Juſtice, will follow no Captain whom they think without it. *Fundamentum Juſtitiæ eſt Fides. Omnes boni Viri Æquitatem amant.* It is the ſtrongeſt Bond of all Society. *Libra juſta Juſtitiam ſervat.* Serm. CCIII.

The general and moſt conſtant Exerciſe of this Virtue, is in Men's private Dealings with each other in the common Affairs of Life. In which, the great Rule of Practice, is That Noble Maxim, founded in the eternal Reaſon of Things, and in the univerſal Benefit of Mankind, and enforced moreover by Our Saviour as a fundamental Doctrine of the Goſpel; "Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto You, even ſo do unto Them; for This, (ſays he,) is the Law and the Prophets."

It cannot be expected that I ſhould enumerate the various Inſtances, to which this Rule may be applied. Its Uſe, however, in the general, will, upon the ſlighteſt Reflection, clearly appear.

Self-love makes Men very jealous of their own particular Rights, and very expert in fixing their own Dues. We ſhould, therefore, put ourſelves in the Place of him we are concerned with, and then aſk what our Demands would be. And ſuch ſhould be the Practice of Magiſtrates and People, of Parents and Children, of Maſters and Servants, of the Buyer and the Seller. So ſhould we be able to judge impartially what is our Duty in every Relation of Life. Nor would it be poſſible for us, did we thus judge, to err widely from the Path of Righteouſneſs.

But the Matter lies chiefly with Conſcience. For Acts of Injuſtice proceed more commonly from the Depravity of the Heart, than any Defect in the Judgment. If the Mind is well-principled, there will be a uniform and ſteady Regard to Truth and Juſtice, in the general Courſe of our Conduct. A Man of Religion hath a Court of Equity eſtabliſhed in his own Breaſt, whoſe Authority will extend to all his Actions, to thoſe which are not cogniſable by the civil Magiſtrate, as well as to thoſe which are. He will not allow himſelf in any thing which appears to him unjuſt, tho' the doing it may expoſe him to no temporal Inconvenience whatever. Nay, in Matters that are doubtful, he will

(under)

incumbent upon Men the very ſame Obligation, not to wrong the Community; as there is, not to violate any private Man's Right, or defraud any particular Perſon of his Property. The only Reaſon, why Men are not always ſufficiently ſenſible of This; ſo that Many, who are very Juſt in their Dealings between Man and Man, will yet be very fraudulent or rapacious with Regard to the Publick; is, becauſe, in this latter Caſe, it is not ſo obviouſly and immediately apparant upon Whom the Injury falls, as it is in the Caſe of Private Wrongs. But ſo long as the Injury is clear and certain; the Uncertainty of the Perſons upon whom the Injury falls in particular, or the Number of the Perſons among whom the Damage may chance to be divided, alters not at all the Nature of the Crime itſelf. And though Injuries of this Kind, in ſmaller Caſes, are not perhaps immediately felt and complained of, yet when the Publick comes to be wronged by Perſons of large and extenſive Power, then not only the Crime itſelf, but the Effects of it alſo become greater and more apparent, than in the Caſe of private Injuſtice. — Higher yet,

There is a Juſtice and Equity due, not only to the Community or Nation, of which we happen to be a Part; but alſo to All Mankind, as our Fellow-creatures. For "God hath made of One Blood, all

will rather turn the Scale in Favour of his Neighbour than of himſelf.

For the better Illuſtration of the ſeveral Duties we owe in this Reſpect, I ſhall conſider them in Reference to the Perſons, the Properties, and Characters of our Fellow-creatures. And,

1ſt. As to the Perſons of others. Juſtice requires that we be harmleſs and inoffenſive, decent and civil, in our Behaviour towards all Men. We are to be careful that we do nothing whereby our Neighbour may be injured in his Body or Mind, directly or indirectly, by any immediate Act of Violence, or by our ill Advice, Example or Influence. But, on the contrary, we are to ſhew him all the Regard that is his due, (i.e) we are to contribute what lies in our own Power to the Health, Eaſe, and Proſperity, both of his outward and inward Man. When we ſee him in any Danger, we are to reſcue him from it. And when we have an Opportunity to do him any real Service, we are cheerfully to embrace it. And our Obligations thus to act towards Individuals, are to be eſtimated by the Nearneſs of our Relation to them, by the particular Situation we are in, and by the Abilities and Influence we poſſeſs.

2dly, As to our Neighbour's Property.

The Acts by which the Duty of Juſtice is tranſgreſſed in the common, &c. ☞ (under)

in the common Affairs of Private Life, are, (as already obſerved, *) all Sorts of Fraud, and Cheating, all Deceit and Over-reaching in Trade, all Oppreſſion, Extortion, and making unreaſonable Advantage of the Neceſſities of others, all Aſſiſtance or Encouragement given to Others, directly or indirectly, to do Wrong: and alſo neglecting to pay juſt Debts; keeping back the Wages of the Poor which they have earned by their Labour; with every other thing, of the like Kind and Tendency to injure another.

Juſtice requires that we defraud no Man of his Subſtance, either by open Violence, or by Art and Colluſion; but that we "render to every one his Due."

The Magiſtrate is to protect the Subject in the Enjoyment of his Liberty and Property; and the Subject is to do all proper Homage to the Magiſtrate, and to ſupport and aſſiſt him in the Execution of his Office. The Servant is to act with all Fidelity towards his Maſter; and the Maſter is properly to reward the Servant's Labour and Integrity. Perſons in Trade and Buſineſs are to keep their Contracts inviolable, and not to over-reach or deceive one another; but in all their Tranſactions, to do as they would be done by. Thus we are to be true to our Engagements, faithful to our Truſts, and fair in our Dealings. There is a Juſtice alſo due to our Benefactors, which is to be expreſſed by a grateful Acknowledgment of the Favours we have received, and every ſuitable Return our Circumſtances will admit of. (under) A

incumbent upon Men the very ſame Obligation, not to wrong the Community; as there is, not to violate any private Man's Right, or defraud any particular Perſon of his Property. The only Reaſon, why Men are not always ſufficiently ſenſible of This; ſo that Many, who are very Juſt in their Dealings between Man and Man, will yet be very fraudulent or rapacious with Regard to the Publick; is, becauſe, in this latter Caſe, it is not ſo obviouſly and immediately apparant upon Whom the Injury falls, as it is in the Caſe of Private Wrongs. But ſo long as the Injury is clear and certain; the Uncertainty of the Perſons upon whom the Injury falls in particular, or the Number of the Perſons among whom the Damage may chance to be divided, alters not at all the Nature of the Crime itſelf. And though Injuries of this Kind, in ſmaller Caſes, are not perhaps immediately felt and complained of, yet when the Publick comes to be wronged by Perſons of large and extenſive Power, then not only the Crime itſelf, but the Effects of it alſo become greater and more apparent, than in the Caſe of private Injuſtice. — Higher yet,

There is a Juſtice and Equity due, not only to the Community or Nation, of which we happen to be a Part; but alſo to All Mankind, as our Fellow-creatures. For "God hath made of One Blood, all

The general and moſt conſtant Exerciſe of this

As to the Characters of Men; an equitable Regard is to be paid to them. Too many there are, who tho they dare not rob their Neighbour of his Subſtance, yet do not think much of taking from him his good Name. But if a good Name is better than precious Ointment, if it is more valuable to an honeſt Man than any worldly Poſſeſſion whatever, or even Life itſelf; to deprive him of it, or to take Meaſures to that Purpoſe, is an Act of the moſt cruel and atrocious Injuſtice. The Man of Religion therefore, will be ſo far from bearing falſe Witneſs againſt another, that he will be cautious how he inſinuates any thing to his Diſadvantage. Nay, he will be inclined to put a favourable Conſtruction upon Actions that are doubtful, and even upon thoſe which may be in ſome Reſpects blameworthy.

Theſe are the principal Inſtances, &c. ☞ (under)

Theſe are the principal Inſtances, to which the Notion of Juſtice, conſidered in the largeſt and Scriptural Senſe of the Word, extends in the Exerciſe of it towards particular Perſons. But there is alſo further, a Duty of Juſtice towards the Publick. There is incum-

(*) In the preceeding Subject.

incumbent upon Men the very ſame Obligation, not to wrong the Community; as there is, not to violate any private Man's Right, or defraud any particular Perſon of his Property. The only Reaſon, why Men are not always ſufficiently ſenſible of This; ſo that Many, who are very Juſt in their Dealings between Man and Man, will yet be very fraudulent or rapacious with Regard to the Publick; is, becauſe, in this latter Caſe, it is not ſo obviouſly and immediately apparant upon Whom the Injury falls, as it is in the Caſe of Private Wrongs. But ſo long as the Injury is clear and certain; the Uncertainty of the Perſons upon whom the Injury falls in particular, or the Number of the Perſons among whom the Damage may chance to be divided, alters not at all the Nature of the Crime itſelf. And though Injuries of this Kind, in ſmaller Caſes, are not perhaps immediately felt and complained of, yet when the Publick comes to be wronged by Perſons of large and extenſive Power, then not only the Crime itſelf, but the Effects of it alſo become greater and more apparent, than in the Caſe of private Injuſtice. — Higher yet,

There is a Juſtice and Equity due, not only to the Community or Nation, of which we happen to be a Part; but alſo to All Mankind, as our Fellow-creatures. For "God hath made of One Blood, all

Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the Face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation." And it is the Duty of every rational Creature, to look upon himſelf as a Part or Member of that One univerſal Community, ſent into the World by the Great Author of Nature, to promote, (as much as in Him lies,) the publick Good and Welfare of all his Fellow-creatures: "For no Man liveth to himſelf, and no Man dieth to himſelf." This is That univerſal Equity and Benevolence, That "Bond of Perfectneſs," That "Fulfilling of the Whole Law," which in Scripture is ſtiled "Loving our Neighbours as ourſelves," and "Doing unto All Men as we would they ſhould do unto Us." This is what our Saviour calls, being "perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect:" And imitating of "Him, who does Good to All, and whoſe tender Mercies are over all his Works."

Having thus diſtinctly deſcribed, (which was the Firſt thing propoſed,) the Nature of this Virtue of Juſtice, the Particulars in which it conſiſts, and the Bounds to which its Obligation extends, I proceed.

II. To conſider the Neceſſity of the Practice of this Virtue, the Benefits thence naturally ariſing to Mankind, and the Folly and Miſchief of every Sort

of

of Iniquity. And this appears evidently, in the very Nature and Reaſon of the thing. For upon the ſecuring of Mens Properties, depends all human Society; and without Juſtice and Equity, there could be no Commerce or Converſation amongſt Men: Nor is there any other poſſible Way, by which Mankind could be diſtinguiſhed from the Creatures below them, which devour each other according to their Strength, and have No Title or Property in any thing: They would All be in the Caſe which was fore-told concerning Iſhmael; "His Hand will be againſt every Man, and every Man's Hand againſt Him." On the contrary: Were this Virtue of Juſtice and Equity, Benevolence and Good-Will, univerſally practiſed amongſt Mankind; the Benefit of it would be incredibly and inconceivably great: Inſomuch that even this preſent mortal State, would be a Sort of Anticipation of that "New Heaven and New Earth, wherein Righteouſneſs is to dwell" for ever. The Prophet Iſaiah gives us a moſt eloquent Deſcription of the Happineſs of ſuch a State, in his Prediction of the Effect which the univerſal Prevailing of true Religion and of the Kingdom of the Meſſiah would produce in the World; "With Righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity for the Meek of the Earth; and he ſhall ſmite

the Earth with the Rod of his Mouth, and with the Breath of his Lips ſhall he ſlay the Wicked: And Righteouſneſs ſhall be the Girdle of his Loins, and Faithfulneſs the Girdle of his Reins: The Wolf alſo ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lie down with the Kid; and the Calf and the young Lion and the Fatling together, and a little Child ſhall lead them: They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy, in all my holy Mountain; for the Earth ſhall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea." Indeed, the Wiſeſt Men even in the Heathen World itſelf, had ſuch a Senſe of the exceeding and glorious Happineſs, which the univerſal Practice of Righteouſneſs would introduce upon Earth, that the Poets attempted to deſcribe it under the Fiction of the Golden Age: And One of the Beſt of their Philoſophers, ſpeaking of Univerſal Juſtice and Equity, as the Top and Perfection of all Virtues, expreſſes himſelf in the following Manner; that "if This Virtue could be repreſented viſibly to mortal Eyes, it would raiſe in us an inexpreſſible Love and Admiration of it;" being in itſelf ſo truly beautiful and lovely, that even "the Motions of the heavenly Bodies are not ſo admirably regular and harmonious, nor the Brightneſs of the Sun and Stars ſo ornamental to the viſible Fabrick of the World, as the univerſal Practice of this illuſtrious

illuſtrious Virtue would be conducive to the Glory and Happineſs of the rational Part of this lower Creation."

Great, therefore, and indiſpenſible is the Obligation upon all Men, to promote the univerſal Practice of Juſtice, Righteouſneſs, and Equity. So that, were not Men ſtrangely and moſt unnaturally corrupted, by perverſe Opinions and ill Habits, prevailing againſt the cleareſt Reaſon, it would be impoſſible for any Man not to be aſhamed of Doing Iniquity.

In a Word: — What the Sun's forſaking that equal Courſe, which now, by diffuſing gentle Warmth and Light, cheriſhes, confirms, and ſtrengthens every thing in a due Proportion thro the whole Syſtem; and on the contrary, his burning up, by an irregular and diſorderly Motion, ſome of the Orbs with inſupportable Heat, and leaving Others to periſh in extreme Cold and Darkneſs, — What Hurricanes, Storms, and Tempeſts: What Theſe are, and would be, to the Natural World; That very ſame thing, Injuſtice and Tyranny, Iniquity and all Wickedneſs, is to the Moral and Rational Part of the Creation: only with this aggravating Difference; that This latter is a perverſe and wilful Depravation, of Creatures originally endued with Knowledge and Liberty, after the Image and Similitude of Him that created them.

Juſtice, therefore, is neceſſary and eſſential to Society, which derives its very Being from it, and could not ſubſiſt the leaſt Part of Time without it; Fears may drive, or Hopes may draw Men together; but it is Juſtice which forms them into a Society, and keeps them in it, when it is formed: that every Member may do and receive Juſtice, is the Principle upon which it is bnilt, and upon which it muſt ſtand.

In the general Society which comprehends all Mankind, the Rules of doing as we would be done by, of Humanity and Benevolence, (which reſult from its very Conſtitution, and by which it is ſupported, and muſt continue to exiſt,) are the Inſtitutes of Natural Juſtice; every diſtinct Community, is a Subdiviſion under this greater, ſubordinate and ſubſervient to it; and all the various Forms of Government, are only collateral Aſſiſtances, or artificial Improvements of this univerſal natural Society; they are all eſtabliſhed upon the ſame Principles, and calculated for the firmer Union of their reſpective Members, and rendering them more worthy Citizens of the World: and all Local, Political Statutes, or Municipal Laws, are nothing more than Explanations, and Promulgations of Parts of the general Inſtitutes of Juſtice, adapted to particular Seaſons, Places, and Circumſtances, with additional Enforcements for the Obſervance of them; and

and whatever human Ordinances do not coincide with and ſtrengthen theſe, are uſeleſs and troubleſome; and what interferes with, or contradicts them, are in themſelves null and void.

As every civil Polity, therefore, is founded upon, and derives the Sanction of its Laws from publick and diſtributive Juſtice; ſo it is no leſs beholden for its Welfare and Proſperity to private and commutative Juſtice; which is the very Life of Commerce, and creates that Truſt and Confidence among Mankind, without which, there could be no Exchange of the Fruits of their Labours, nor any free Communication of the Goods of Life. Common Wants are redreſſed, and mutual, friendly Aſſiſtances reached out, by its impartial Hand. It is the ſole Arbiter of Diſputes, and Preſerver of Peace, by amicably terminating Differences between Men, & reconciling their ſeveral Intereſts; and, in general, it is that powerful Cement, which binds every Part of a Society together, and renders it one compact Building, whoſe Strength is in exact Proportion to the Juſtice that is ſpread in it. If it runs thro the Whole, and filleth every Joint, then the Houſe is what Jeruſalem was, "at Unity in itſelf," indiſſoluble within, and impregnable from without.

Add to this, the particular Reward, which God himſelf has moreover, in an extraordinary Manner,

promiſed in Scripture to the Practice of this General and Extenſive Virtue. "The Way of the Wicked is as Darkneſs, they know not at what they ſtumble; But the Path of the Juſt is as the ſhining Light, which ſhineth more and more, unto the perfect Day." And again, "A juſt Man falleth ſeven Times, and riſeth again; but the Wicked ſhall fall into Miſchief."

"This is the Portion of a Wicked Man with God, and the Heritage of Oppreſſors which they ſhall receive from the Almighty: ---- Tho they heap up Silver as the Duſt, and prepare Raiment as the Clay; He may prepare it, but the Juſt ſhall put it on, and the Innocent ſhall divide the Silver: For the Wealth of the Sinner is laid up for the Juſt."

Theſe, and the like Promiſes, were very frequently (in the Times of the Old Teſtament,) fulfilled literally by God's providential Diſpoſition of temporal Bleſſings. But becauſe, even in theſe Times, they were alſo often not fulfilled, and eſpecially in Times of Perſecution; it is therefore very probable, that even THEN Thoſe Promiſes, (as is evident in the Caſe of Abraham, *) had a ſecret and implicit Regard to That future State, which in the New Teſtament is ſo clearly and diſtinctly revealed. The Happineſs of which future State, is by our Saviour ſo peculiarly declared to be the Portion and Property of Juſt Men, that the

(*) See Vol. v. Page 367.

"Reſur-

"Reſurrection unto Life" is emphatically ſtiled THEIR Reſurrection; ſo that even to thoſe who ſhall be rewarded for other Virtues, the Promiſe is, that "They ſhall be recompenced AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST." And, in the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, That "general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born in Heaven," who are joined "with the innumerable Company of Angels, and with Jeſus the Mediator of the New Teſtament, and with God the Judge of All;" are ſtiled "the Spirits of Juſt Men, made perfect." And the Character given by St. Peter to that "New Heaven and New Earth," is, that "Therein dwelleth Righteouſneſs:" To which there ſeems to be a plain Alluſion, even in the Old Teſtament; [viz] "Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy Land, Waſting nor Deſtruction within thy Borders; but thou ſhalt call thy Walls Salvation, and thy Gates Praiſe:---- Thy People alſo ſhall all be Righteous, they ſhall inherit the Land forever."

Sermon

SERMON CCIV.

On the ſame Subject.
Motives to it.

Iſaiah. lvi. 1. "Thus ſaith the Lord, Keep ye "Judgment, and do Juſtice."

As Juſtice is neceſſary to the Preſervation and Well-being of Mankind, ſo, beſides the Advantages of it, there are many Conſiderations peculiarly conducing to it, [viz] From the Excellency of the Virtue itſelf; from the Nature of God, and the Character of Chriſt, as well as from the ample Proviſion made in our Conſtitution, for the Practice of it. — And firſt,

The firſt Excellency of this Social Virtue which offers itſelf to us, is, that it is equal, impartial, fit, and right in itſelf, founded upon Truth, or, is rather a Part of Truth itſelf; for it hath all the Properties of it; it is uniform, conſiſtent, and agreeable to the Reaſon and Nature of things; it is alſo more invariable, than the Law of the Medes and Perſians; and, like the Son of God, is the ſame Yeſterday, To-day, and For-ever.

2dly,

2dly, As Juſtice is Truth, ſo the God of Truth is a God of Juſtice. It is natural and eſſential to him; it is his nobleſt Perfection, or ſupreme Attribute, abſolute, uncontroulable; and which, infinite Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, ſerve and obey: "Juſtice and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne;" (i.e) it dwelleth with, and is eſtabliſhed by them. "His Sceptre is a right Sceptre," his Adminiſtration is equal, and his Reign is the Reign of incorrupt Juſtice, ſupported by almighty Power and unerring Wiſdom: the Laws of his Kingdom were inſtituted, and are put in Execution by it: all the Subjects of his univerſal Empire, are equally bound, and equally protected, by them; for "God is no Reſpecter of Perſons;" he regardeth not the Rich more than the Poor, as they are all the Works of his Hands; and though he can do what he pleaſes with theſe Works, yet he is pleaſed to do nothing but what is fair and upright. It would indeed be impertinent in the Clay to ſay to its Potter, "Why haſt thou made me thus?" yet he hath faſhioned it as truly, and dealt by it as equitably, as if he had been accountable to it; indeed, under the Jewiſh Diſpenſation, (when God vouchſafed to ſpeak by the Mouths of his Prophets, and gave the moſt explicit Declarations of his Will,) he condeſcended to a human Arbitration; and called upon the Houſe of Iſrael to

judge of his Actions, by the ſame Cannon he had given them to ſquare their own by; at what Time he pleaded his own Cauſe with them, & challenged them to ſhow, wherein his Ways were unequal. (*) And,

As Juſtice is thus eternal; and God, the expreſs Image of it: ſo the Example of Chriſt is no leſs enforcing of it. The Character predicted of Him, is,

"The Lord our Righteousness."

And what King was ever ſo proſperous, as This, who, by the Propogation of the Goſpel hath enlarged his Dominions ſo wonderfully, over the moſt diſtant Regions of the habitable World? What Conqueſt was ever ſo glorious, as That, which he hath gained over the Errors and Prejudices, the Luſts and Paſſions, of wicked and miſtaken Men; even indeed, over all the Powers of Darkneſs, and Sin, and Death, and Hell? Who ever executed Righteouſneſs and Judgment in the Earth, like Him, who hath enacted Laws ſo holy, ſo prudent, and beneficial; that, if duly obſerved, the Effect of them muſt be ſuch exact Juſtice, ſuch uninterrupted Order and Peace, ſuch Gentleneſs and Good-nature, and univerſal Charity, as would make even an Heaven upon Earth. — But,

4thly, The Importance and Neceſſity of this Virtue, may alſo be inferred, from the gracious Proviſion

(*) Ezekiel xviii, 25.

which

which our omniſcient Creator hath thought fit to make for the Practice of it.

As he deſigned us for a Social State, ſo he hath made all the Preparations, and, furniſhed us with all the Qualifications, both external and internal, proper for it; he hath formed reciprocal Dependencies, and made a Communion of our Powers abſolutely neceſſary for our Welfare; he hath alſo endowed us with Underſtanding to diſcern theſe Dependencies, and imprinted the Principles of Juſtice on our Minds, in ſuch large Characters, that "he who runs, may read them, and the way-faring Man, though a Fool, cannot err therein;" every One knows what it is to be honeſt and true in his Dealings; Providence hath made it the common Senſe of Mankind, and all, not only acknowledge and appeal to it, as to a well-known Rule, but their Conviction is accompanied with a Senſe of its Obligation; they feel it to be their Duty, and their Conſciences prompt their Obſervance, and upbraid them for their Neglect of it.

Add to this, That as Juſtice is the very Soul of Society, ſo it hath been judged neceſſary; for the more effectual Security of this vital Principle, to reinforce this Knowledge and this Senſe of Duty, with a ſtrong Affection for it; that by mixing a Kind of Neceſſity with Liberty in our Conſtitution, we might be

ſo far compelled to the Exerciſe of this Virtue, as is requiſite for preſerving the Being of Society, and be entruſted with no more Power, than of rendering ourſelves more or leſs happy, by our greater or leſs Uſe of it: the Love of Juſtice, therefore, is a natural Paſſion implanted in us by Divine Providence, thro' which we are powerfully drawn towards it, and muſt offer Violence to ourſelves, to turn from it; hence, it hath that Majeſty ſtampt upon it, as to command univerſal Reſpect; all Mankind are prepoſſeſſed in its Favour, and, whatever Men may be in themſelves, they cannot help eſteeming it in another; Truth is ſtrong, and will prevail; it is ſtrong in itſelf, and it is ſtrong in the Hearts of Men: the Stream of their Affections always ſets in with it, and with whatever Force it may for a Time be obſtructed, yet, like the Power of mighty Waters, it will at length break thro, and carry all Oppoſition before it.

Thus ſtands the Ground and Foundation of this Virtue of Juſtice: It is Truth itſelf, and therefore eternal: and God, who is the expreſs Image of it, hath made ample Proviſion for it, ſtrongly implanting in the Nature and Reaſon of Mankind, a Regard to, and Veneration for it; and by his Laws hath ſtrictly enjoined it, Chriſt alſo confirming the ſame.

But further, As the Dignity and extenſive Influ-

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ence of this Virtue calls for every Recommendation, let us now take a View of it in a different Light, & ſee how its Picture will be heightened, by ſetting its oppoſite Quality, (as already conſidered,) as a Foil, to it.

And here, Injuſtice, (as we have ſeen,) is falſe and dark; it hath an inherent natural Turpitude, and is odious in itſelf, and offenſive to the Deity, "who is of purer Eyes, than to behold Iniquity." "He hath no Pleaſure in Wickedneſs, neither ſhall any Evil dwell with him: the Fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his Sight; for he hateth all the Workers of Iniquity."

Again, As Juſtice is the Cement, ſo Injuſtice is the Diſſolution of Society; where it enters, a Debility and Relaxation neceſſarily enſue; as it increaſes, the Strength of the Edifice decreaſes, till, at length, all the Connections are entirely broken, and the Parts are not only disjoined, but acquire a repulſive Quality, but fly from each other. — And further,

If we want a clearer Demonſtration of Injuſtice being the Bane of Society, we might borrow Arguments from the Profeſſors of Iniquity, who furniſh us with Weapons againſt themſelves: for this very Principle which unites their Intentions againſt Mankind, cannot unite their Affections to one another; and ſhould theſe Sons of Rapine purſue their Scheme to its utmoſt Latitude, and be uniformly unjuſt thro' their whole

Conduct, every One's Hand would be lifted up againſt his Brother, and his Brother's againſt him; and the Houſe of Iniquity, being thus totally diſtracted within itſelf, muſt inevitably fall: when, therefore, they enter into a Confederacy among themſelves, for the more ſucceſsful Practice of Injuſtice, they are obliged to act out of Character, to deſert their own Profeſſion, and find it abſolutely neceſſary to call in Juſtice to their Aſſiſtance, and obſerve ſome Rules of Honeſty & Honour among themſelves, to hold them together, and form the Bands of Iniquity; (*) and manifold Experience hath abundantly proved, that they are never more effectually broken, than when they are induced from the Motive of Lucre or Self-preſervation, to act upon their own Principles, by informing againſt and betraying their Companions. How little Truſt, then, can they repoſe in one another, whoſe every Practice is to deceive others? And how unnatural muſt all thoſe Schemes be, which are inconſiſtent with and ſubverſive of themſelves? And, in what a deſperate Situation are the Projectors placed, who are compelled to act againſt the Bent of their own Minds, for carrying them into Execution; and whilſt they are drawn together by theſe common Intereſts, are repelled from one another by their common Principles?

But, on the other Hand, with what powerful Re-

(*) See the latter Part of Note (*) Page 41.

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commendation doth that Virtue come, when the Practice of its moſt inveterate Enemies bears ſuch a Teſtimony to it? What mighty Influence likewiſe muſt it have, when it reaches even to thoſe who are fartheſt removed from it? And, if this forced and partial Application of it be ſo uſeful and neceſſary, even to its Foes, how infinitely beneficial muſt it be to thoſe real Friends, who devote themſelves entirely to its Service, and direct their whole Conduct by it?

But, to finiſh this Contraſt: — There is alſo an innate Averſion in the human Breaſt to Injuſtice; we are aſhamed of it in ourſelves, and loathe it in our Neighbour; nothing renders a Perſon more contemptible in the Eyes of the World, than Iniquity; and where Nature operates freely, Men cannot help being affected at the Relation of Violences and Oppreſſions, however diſtant from them in Time or Place, and moved with Indignation againſt the Oppreſſors.

But Laſtly, I am to inculcate the Doctrines, and point out the Uſes reſulting from this Subject.

And, firſt, Since Juſtice is right and fit in itſelf, and agreeable to the Nature and Reaſon of things, it muſt be intrinſically and eſſentially good, and merit univerſal Regard and Eſteem; and, as it renders to every one his Due, it ought in Return to have its Due, and be gratefully received by all. There is alſo a

Beauty in Uniformity and Conſiſtency; and if Truth in general be venerable, how ſacred ſhould that Part be held, which, in an eſpecial Manner, concerns us and our Welfare? — Again,

2dly, As the nobleſt Conceptions we can form of the Deity, are chiefly drawn from his Juſtice; as he, with this Attribute alone, would appear moſt excellent, but without it, would ſeem monſtrous in ſome Reſpects, and defective in all; the Idea therefore of a ſupreme Being ſhould always convey to us the Senſe of infinite Juſtice; and, how glorious muſt this Virtue be, which ſets a Luſtre upon, and perfects all his other Attributes; when Omnipotency, through its Direction, becomes awful, but not dreadful; when Mercy, being tempered with it, excites Hopes, but not Preſumption; and when Knowledge, conſidered as its Attendant, is extenſively beneficial, and ſuperlatively amiable? and what inexpreſſible Satisfaction muſt it give to all the Subjects of his univerſal Empire, to find this divine Accompliſhment, to be the darling Object of the King of Kings? Hence, they both love and fear him, and his Service is perfect Freedom: Faith, in this ſovereign Attribute, is the Source of genuine Piety; when we are firmly perſuaded, that what he commands us to do is moſt right, and what he appoints us to ſuffer, is abſolutely beſt for us, then we

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are all Obedience and Reſignation: we make his Will our own, and whatever Difficulties or Diſtreſſes we meet with, they appear in the Mirror of this Faith to be Benefits; and through an implicit Truſt in his Juſtice, we receive them with Complecency.

But, if ſuch an ample Confidence be placed, thro' the Means of this unerring Power, in the Deity, a proportionate Degree of Credit will be given to every other Poſſeſſor of it: and if it be the brighteſt Diadem in the Crown of Heaven, with what Radiance muſt it ſhine in our Breaſts? It would there perfect every Endowment; and by making it preſide over our Affections, and giving it the Lead to the Underſtanding, and all the Powers of the Mind, we ſhould heighten our Reſemblance to our Creator, and exalt the human to a godlike Nature. — But,

3dly, As Juſtice is the Bond, and Injuſtice the Diſſolution of Society; it is the firſt and principal Duty of the moſt ſocial of all Beings, to purſue the one and avoid the other. Injuſtice is infamous in itſelf, and odious in the Sight of Mankind; we ſhould therefore flee from it, as from the Face of a Serpent, to which we have a natural Antipathy: and as nothing can be expected from open and public Villany, but Shame and Confuſion of Face, let no Man flatter himſelf that he can make any Advantage of covert or

ſecret Wrong: for how can one Kind of Iniquity be mended by another that that is worſe? can Hypocriſy give what it hath not? or can Good reſult from the Compoſition of two Evils? To be foul within, and fair without, to hide a corrupt Heart under a ſound Form, is ſo arduous a Taſk, that the greateſt Diſſembler cannot long prevent a Diſcovery; but however arduous the Taſk may be, yet the Sons of Iniquity find it impoſſible to ſucceed without attempting it, & at length, to their Sorrow, find it impoſſible to ſucceed with it. Diſſimulation, then, by firſt deceiving others, turns it Cheat at laſt upon its Followers themſelves.

Let us, therefore, take Care how we lay any Streſs upon that Vice, which deſtroys all Confidence in one another, and is like the ſharp pointed Staff, mentioned by the Prophet, "on which, if a Man lean, it will go into his Hand and pierce it." — But further,

Since Juſtice is eſſential to Society, and Men can no more live as ſocial Beings without it, than they can breath without Air; ſhould they not eſteem it as precious as their Lives? Both their Intereſt and their Duty call upon them to ſhew the higheſt Regard to it; and in whatever Circumſtances they are placed, or in whatever Capacity they are acting, they ſhould make it their conſtant Companion and their Guide.

If they be conſidered merely as Individuals abſtracted

ted from Society, even in his partial View, it will appear a moſt deſirable Accompliſhment; ſince it hath pleaſed the Author of all Righteouſneſs to implant in us a Love of Juſtice, the cheriſhing and improving of it, is following the Direction of Nature, or a Concurrence with the Will of God; it is likewiſe ſtrengthening that Affection, which will balance all the reſt, and eſtabliſh a general Equanimity and Peace of Mind.

Or, If we be conſidered as Members of a Family, or in Reſpect only to our neareſt Relations, Juſtice is as neceſſary in the leaſt, as in the largeſt Societies; indeed, it may bind the faſter for having the fewer Subjects to encloſe: it is therefore the Compoſer of Domeſtick Harmony, and "bringeth Men to be of one Mind in an Houſe:" and, if it be "a joyful thing to dwell together in Unity," and if Quietneſs under our own Roof be the next eligible Bleſſing to Quietneſs in our own Breaſt; how ought we to admire that Qualification, by which alone, this Joy and this Bleſſing are to he obtained? — Again,

If we conſider ourſelves in Reſpect to our Fellow-creatures, or as Members of Society; ſince Juſtice is a Standard fixed by Nature, a well-known Rule, which all the World acknowledge and appeal to; let us, who are acting in a private Station, learn to make it a Rule to ourſelves, for adjuſting our Debts and

Demands, that we may not give leſs to others, or require more from them, than what Juſtice metes out to us all. The Way to be dealt fairly by, is to deal fairly; if we act uprightly with our Neighbour, we may expect, and for the moſt Part ſhall find, that he will act uprightly with us; and "what Meaſure we mete, will generally be meaſured to us again;" for Juſtice will breed Juſtice; indeed, it will ſoon do more, it will breed Benevolence and Love: tho it is a Debt, for the Payment of which we really deſerve no Thanks, yet in many Caſes, the Creditor, where it is refuſed, hath no Remedy againſt his Debtor, and in all, will find it difficult to recover it: he, therefore, will think himſelf under ſome Obligations for the prompt Receipt of it, which, by a frequent Repetition and Retaliation, will neceſſarily create a mutual Confidence and Endearment. There is, therefore, a very eaſy and natural Tranſition from Probity to Love; they are nearly allied to one another; for, that is the natural Parent to Friendſhip, and from being habitually righteous, we ſoon become benevolent and generous.

But laſtly, If Juſtice be ſuch a neceſſary Qualification in PRIVATE Life, how much more valuable muſt it be in a PUBLIC Station, and eſpecially in thoſe who are the Profeſſors and Diſpenſers of it.

The Influence of the private Perſon, is like that of a weak

weak Spring, whoſe Current is ſmall, and reaches but a little Way; but they who act in a public Character, are the main Sources of Equity, from which, when open and free, Judgment, (uncorrupted and pure,) "runs down as Waters, and Righteouſneſs as a mighty Stream," ſpreading itſelf through the whole Land, refreſhing and enlivening every Plant, from the proudeſt Cedar to the humbleſt Herb; then the Earth brings forth her Increaſe, and every Man, ſitting under his Fig-tree and his Vine, reaps unmoleſted the Fruits of his Labours, and enjoys all the Bleſſings of Society.

"How beautiful are their Feet," who are not only the Meſſengers, but the Authors of Peace, and make the glad Tidings which they bring!" And, how is every Breaſt enlarged at the Approach of thoſe venerable Magiſtrates who are clothed with Righteouſneſs, and whoſe Judgment is as a Robe and a Diadem; who make the Heart of the Innocent to leap for Joy, and of the Guilty to tremble for Fear; who are Fathers to the Fatherleſs, and inſtead of an Huſband to the Widow; and the Cauſe, which they know not, they ſearch out.

Thrice happy is that Kingdom, where even-handed Juſtice beſtows her ampleſt Rewards on the moſt deſerving, however obſcured in the low Vale of Life; and weighs out her heavieſt Puniſhments to the vileſt

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Criminals, however diſtinguiſhed by their Birth, their Title, or their Fortune.

But however blind ſhe may be with Reſpect to Men's Perſons, may ſhe ever be the moſt quick-ſighted in the Diſcernment of the Truth!

May ſhe pour forth the largeſt Vials of her Fury upon thoſe Caitiffs, who dare to violate her Courts, or attempt to ſubvert her Judgments by Perjury or Corruption!

May the Injured always find free and eaſy Acceſs to her, and ſpeedy and effectual Redreſs from her!

And may her Decrees never loſe ought of their Value from frivolous Delays, or be embarraſſed with unreaſonable Expences!

And may thoſe Stewards, who are ſelected for their Abilities and Integrity from their Brethren, and entruſted with the Interpretation of the Laws of their Country, uſe their diſcretionary Power in making them contain the Subſtance, as well as the Form of Juſtice; and through their liberal Conſtructions, may they aboliſh that unnatural Diſtinction between Legal and Right; and prevent this Virtue, which is moſt amiable in her native Simplicity, from being enveloped in her Drapery!

So ſhall They who ſit in the Seat of Judgment, be "accounted worthy of double Honour;" worthy to be

be received for the high Office they bear; and more worthy to be adored for the faithful Execution of it.

And ſo ſhall they arrive at the higheſt Pitch of Glory, that Ambition can aſpire to, or Perfection reach, either in this World, or the next, [viz] the Verdict of Conſcience, and the Seal of univerſal Approbation here upon Earth, and the Ratification of Both in that ſupreme Court of Juſtice, where their great Archetype, the All-judge of Heaven and Earth, will ſit to receive them with that welcome Eulogy; "Well done, ye good and faithful Servants; ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you Rulers over many; enter ye into the Joy of the Lord. (*)

(*) See the Diſcourſe on the Duty of Governors, in this Work.

Sermon

SERMON CCV.

The Law of Equity; a chief Help to the preventing of Fraud, and Application of Juſtice.

Matt. vii. 12. "Whatſoever ye would that Men "ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for "this is the Law and the Prophets."

Having inveighed againſt the ſeveral Acts of Injuſtice, as too generally practiſed, whether in maliciouſly hurting the Perſons or Goods of others – Of accepting the Perſons of Men in the Adminiſtrations of Juſtice – The not being faithful to our Truſts, nor true to our Promiſes – The with-holding juſt Dues – The not doing the Labour of our Hire; Over-reaching in Trade, and taking Advantage of the Ignorant, the Neceſſitous, and Needy; – Or proſecuting in Law, or otherwiſe, with Rigour and Severity; and recommended to you its oppoſite Virtue, pointing out its peculiar Properties, and extenſive real Merits, with the Doctrines reſulting from it – I cannot addreſs you better, than in theſe Words of our Saviour

Saviour before us, as being eſpecially reſtrictive of the former, and a chief Help to the Application of the latter.

"Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets."

This Rule is of a very large Extent, and of ſingular Uſe in the whole Conduct of Life; it comprehends under it all the ſeveral Branches both of Juſtice and Charity; and, (if rightly underſtood,) will direct us how we ought to behave one towards another in all poſſible Circumſtances of Life.

This I ſhall endeavour to ſhew diſtinctly as I proceed in the Diſcourſe; at preſent, and before I advance to thoſe ſeveral Particulars which the Subject before us will ſuggeſt, I ſhall only obſerve, that this Rule was given us by a Perſon of infinite Wiſdom, and of abſolute Authority. It is not merely the Direction of a Philoſopher, who might deceive others, or be deceived himſelf, but iſſued from him in whom were lodged infinite Treaſures of Wiſdom; who comprehends in One View all the ſeveral Relations in which we can ſtand to one another; who muſt diſcern what is, in all Caſes, moſt proper to be done, and therefore who was the fitteſt, indeed, the only fit Perſon, to preſcribe an univerſal Rule of Life.

To this Infinity of Wiſdom let us add the Perfection of his Authority alſo. He was the Meſſiah, the Anointed of God, and upon That Account inveſted with an abſolute Right to give us Laws; indeed, (which is yet more to our Purpoſe,) he is God-ſelf, One with his Father, and muſt therefore have this Authority belonging to him inſeparably.

Let us, then, conſider the Rule before us with That Attention which is due to infinite Wiſdom, and with That Reverence which is owing to abſolute Authority.

The general Senſe of the Rule before us, as truly evident, is this, [viz] that whatever Good or Advantage we ſhould be apt to deſire of others, that, in our Turn, we ſhould be free and ready to beſtow at all Times on them, according to their Need; for, the ſame Deſires which we feel in ourſelves are common to our whole Kind. — But,

However eaſy this Rule may ſeem to be, yet there are great and frequent Miſtakes in the Application of it, and Men but too commonly make it their Authority, not only to retaliate Good, but Evil alſo to their Neighbour, promiſcuouſly applying it to every Act of Man.

With Reſpect, therefore, to our Dealings with Men, this Rule is intended to direct us in the right Diſcharge of

of ſuch Actions only towards them as are known to be lawful; it is by no Means intended to be a Rule of Retribution, or of Requital, but of Kindneſs. It muſt therefore reſtrain us from doing thoſe ill Turns to our Neighbour, which we ourſelves ſhould be apt to reſent. (*) It

(*) What we actually would that others ſhould to us, is not in all Caſes a Rule of our Duty: but the Lawfulneſs of the Action is to be preſuppoſed. For we may not do, or forbear a Thing to our Neighbour, merely becauſe, (were we in their Circumſtances, and they in ours,) we might be willing enough, unreaſonably willing, to obtain it from them. For Inſtance, A Benefactor is not bound to comply with the Demands of ſuch as may aſk unmerited Favours, tho' conſcious that he himſelf might be apt to make as extravagant Requeſts, were it his Turn to be the Object of another's Beneficence. The Duty muſt be taken in a limited Senſe; it muſt be the Deſire of Reaſon: for a Man may covet all the Riches in the World, and wiſh that his Neighbour would give him his whole Subſtance; yet it would be a very extraordinary Injunction which obliged him, for that Reaſon, to part with all he hath, and give it to his Neighbour. This would be *wrong*, and impracticable: It would be wrong, becauſe it would be going from one Extreme into the other, and impoveriſhing himſelf and Family: and impracticable, becauſe the Exceſs of ſelfiſh Deſires would neceſſarily prevent ſuch ſocial Extravagancies; and therefore, when theſe Words are deſigned as a perfect Rule of Juſtice, they muſt be underſtood in this limited Senſe, *All things whatſoever*, that are fit and reaſonable to deſire from others, *do ye unto them*.

Again, A Magiſtrate is not at Liberty, much leſs under an Obligation to turn the Edge of Juſtice from an importunate Offender; becauſe, if he himſelf were the Criminal, he ſhould certainly and equally deſire to eſcape unpuniſhed. The Rule, therefore, which makes what we deſire of other Men, the Meaſure of our Dealing with them, is to

It may be thought, that the Rule, thus tempered and qualified, will not be of any ſpecial Uſe or Moment to us, in the Direction of our Practice, inaſmuch as the Lines of Duty do not ſeem to be more clearly marked out, by this Method of Compariſon, than they would have been by a direct Injunction to us ſo to deal with others, as right Reaſon and our Conſciences inform us that we ought to deal with them. For, after all, when we have made another Man's Caſe ours, we are ſtill left to judge what, under ſuch a Change of Circumſtances, we might, in Equity and Reaſon, expect from him, before we can determine after what Manner we are to behave ourſelves towards him: and therefore, which Way ſoever we take the Meaſure of our Duty to the Bar of Equity and Reaſon, we muſt, it ſeems, in Order to the fixing it, always finally appeal.

It is true, we muſt. — But the Maxim of the Text is That which, of all others, doth moſt effectually aſſiſt us towards making a free Uſe of our Reaſon, & forming a right Judgment of things on ſuch Occaſions; for, by the Means of it, we are able to conſider our Duty

be underſtood, not of vicious and exceſſive Deſires; but of ſuch only as are fit and reaſonable; ſuch Requeſts as we can, in our calmeſt Thoughts, juſtify to ourſelves; ſuch as we are ſure, may be made without Indecency, and cannot be refuſed without Inhumanity.

Duty without Prejudice, and to ſtate the Bounds of it impartially and fairly. When we determine amiſs concerning the Obligations incumbent upon us, in Reſpect of other Men, it is by Reaſon of that ſtrong Weight of Self-love which, like a Bias, inclines and ſecretly ſways our Minds towards that Side on which our own Intereſt lies. To ſet this Error right; we ſuppoſe ourſelves to be the Men who are to receive this Treatment from others, which we are about to practiſe toward them; and then, the ſame ſelfiſh Principle makes that appear very hard and unreaſonable, which before it inclined us to approve; and thus our warped & perverted Judgment, by being bent as much towards the oppoſite Side, recovers its Straitneſs. The Rule of the Text therefore is, in Truth, a wiſe Art of rebating one Degree of our Partiality by another; it enables us to take two ſeveral Views of our Duty, to regard it in different Situations, and under different Lights; and, by That Means, more diſtinctly and thoroughly to diſcern it.

There is nothing, we know, that gives a Man ſo true and lively a Senſe of the Sufferings of others, or reſtrains him ſo powerfully from doing unrighteous and oppreſſive things, as his having ſmarted formerly himſelf under the Experience of them. Now, the ſuppoſing another Man's Ill-uſage to be ours, is the

giving ourſelves a preſent Senſe, as it were, a Kind of feigned Experience of it; which doth, for the Time, ſerve all the Purpoſes of a true one.

Upon theſe Accounts it is that the Precept of the Text carries a greater Evidence, and a fuller Degree of Conviction in it, than any other Rule of Morality whatever: for though we may be prejudiced againſt Others, yet we cannot be ſo againſt Ourſelves. The general Obſervance of this Rule, therefore, would cauſe that we ſhould not do an Injury willingly to any Man. (*)

Its apparent Equity and Reaſonableneſs is what we ſhall next conſider; and This is ſo plain a Point as not to want, or indeed be capable of, a ſolemn Proof: for the Precept manifeſtly aims at That which is the known Foundation of Equity and Juſtice, in all Matters of Intercourſe between Man and Man; the reducing things to one common Standard, by the Application of which they are all to be examined and tried. There muſt be one common Rule by which all Men are mutually obliged to regulate their Conduct, in acting and ſuffering, in commanding and obeying, in giving and receiving; and This can be no Other than the

(*) If a Man would but conſult this Golden Rule, of "dealing to others as he would be dealt by," thoſe very Paſſions which incline him to wrong others, would inſtruct him to right them.

the equal and righteous Rule of the Text, the "doing" in all Caſes, and to all Perſons, "even as we would be done unto." There is no One ſo abſurd and unreaſonable, as not to ſee and acknowledge the abſolute Equity of this Command in the Theory, however he may ſwerve and decline from it in his Practice; and to agree upon it as That golden Mean, which, if univerſally obſerved, would make the World univerſally happy; every Man a Benefactor, a Deity, as it were, to his Fellow-creatures; and Earth the very Image of Heaven.

The actual Equality of Nature, and the Poſſibility of Equality of Conditions in all Men, one Time or other, fully manifeſteth the Equity and Reaſonableneſs of the Rule before us.

It is but fit and reaſonable that we ſhould carry an even Hand between ourſelves and others, becauſe our Neighbour is properly Ourſelves, we being all equal in Nature. — For,

Whatever Difference there may be in Men's outward Circumſtances, (which is merely accidental,) yet when diveſted of Theſe, all Men have the ſame Creator, and are equally related to God; therefore to act by our Neighbour as we would be dealt-by ourſelves, is an univerſal and an indiſpenſible Law of Juſtice. — Beſides,

There is a Poſſibility, if not Probability, of the Equality of all Men's Conditions and Circumſtances, one Time or other; the Man of Dignity and Power may be humbled, and he of low Degree exalted.

The Affairs of Mankind are fluctuating and variable, and we have no Security of maintaining our preſent State; but, for any thing we know to the contrary, a few Days may reduce us to the Neceſſity of requeſting thoſe Favours which it is now in our Power to grant. (*)

He therefore that walks diſorderly, is neither juſt for the preſent, nor provident for the future; but, without looking forward to Poſſibilities, we may eaſily ſee the Neceſſity hereof, by reflecting on our preſent Circumſtances.

All Men are dependent one on another, nor can any Man enjoy himſelf, or indeed ſo much as ſubſiſt, without receiving equal Treatment from Men, as well below, as above him. — Now,

If this be the Caſe, (and we may appeal to the Conſcience of every Man for the Truth of it,) ſurely it muſt

(*) *Omnibus nobis ut Res dant ſeſe, ut Magni atque Humiles ſumus. Omnium Rerum Viciſſitudo eſt. Fortuna nunquàm perpetuò eſt bona. Sors, Domina Campi.* — Time and Chance happen to all things. All worldly things run a continual Round.

See Note (A) Vol. iii. Page 231.

muſt be impoſſible to make our Neighbour's Caſe our own, without acting in ſuch a Manner as we ſhould wiſh he would to us; we muſt unavoidably feel his Diſtreſſes or Deſires, and by relieving him, do the greateſt Favour to ourſelves. — Indeed,

The Reaſonableneſs of this Injunction is ſo very apparent, that it may be thought to need ſcarce any Proof; it ſeems to ſhine by its own native Light.

Though a Man had never heard of Chriſt, & were incapable of receiving this Precept on the Foot of divine Revelation, yet, as ſoon as propoſed to him, he could not but approve it as a juſt and equitable Rule. A Man muſt have loſt all Senſe of Humanity not to feel, in ſome Sort, the Wants of another; we have a direct Conſciouſneſs of our own Needs, and as there is implanted in us a Tenderneſs for our Kind; ſo we cannot but be ſenſible, if we duly reflect, of that Uneaſineſs which affects our Neighbour; and, if we deſire Relief in our own Caſe, it cannot appear otherwiſe than fit and proper that we grant it in the Caſe of another. (*)

And here, it is but turning our Hearts inwardly upon

(*) Self-love, which is implanted in us to ſerve ourſelves, ſhould teach us by our Wants, to ſerve others: whenever it is found not to tend to this End, it is a Rateneſs unworthy an human Being.

upon ourſelves, and ſuppoſing his Caſe ours, and ours his, and we are immediately directed in every Act of Man; for we all love ourſelves, and conſequently muſt be moved with a very ardent Affection towards every thing which appears to us to be good, and muſt abhor, in like Manner, whatever ſhall appear to be evil. It is eaſy in every Caſe to diſcover what we ourſelves might deſire, and conſequently what the Rule of our Conduct in every Caſe ſhould be to every Man. (*) — Indeed,

Did we ſtrictly obſerve this Maxim before us, it would not only prevent all the Frauds and too ſore Oppreſſions which do abound in the World, and which are not more the Infelicities, than the Shame and Reproach of Mankind, and which no Laws, nor Puniſhment can reſtrain, but would induce us to all Love, and to every good Work. Was this Rule generally obſerved; did Men "do as they would be done by," the World would preſent quite another Face. What inviolable Friendſhip might we then expect? what Exactneſs in Commerce? and Eaſineſs in Converſation? Want would, in a great Meaſure, be removed, with Envy, from Society. The Poor would not ſteal from the Rich, nor the Rich bear-hard upon the Poor. There would be no ſuch thing

(*) *Optima Juſtitia eſt, ut Mens ſibi conſcia Recti.*

thing as Fraud and Oppreſſion, no ſecret Miſchiefs, nor open Violence: no Sallies of Ambition, nor graſping at forbidden Greatneſs, to diſturb the World. What Largeneſs of Mind, what Harmony of Humours, what Peace in Families and Kingdoms would this One Maxim, (duly obſerved,) produce? Upon this Principle, public Quarrels would be eaſily reconciled: there would be "no leading into Captivity, nor complaining in our Streets:" Men might then "beat their Swords into Plowſhears, and their Spears into pruning Hooks. Nation would not riſe againſt Nation, neither would they learn War any more;" but "Juſtice would run down like Water, and Righteouſneſs like a mighty Stream." — For,

This Rule detects and convicts, condemns and ſhames Men at a Bar from which none can appeal or except againſt; here no Witneſſes are wanted, (*) no Inqueſt nor Judge, but a Man's own ſelf, which is always preſent, and he that is faulty, his own Conſcience will condemn him; indeed, no Man who conſults This Oracle will find in his Heart to oppreſs his Neighbour by Power or Intereſt with unjuſt Aſſaults, or by baſe cunning Deceit, or take Advantage of his

(*) *Non Bove mactato Cœleſtia Numina gaudent,*
Sed quæ præſtanda eſt, ei ſine Teſte, Fides.
Serm. CCV.

his Weakneſs, his Simplicity, or Need. (*) — For,

This Principle of inherent Self-conſciouſneſs ſticks cloſe to our Nature, and is ever before our Eyes; and if it be but duly applied, will determine us to juſt and righteous, to fair and candid Dealings; for, "meaſuring ourſelves by ourſelves, and comparing ourſelves with ourſelves," we take the ſureſt Way to be both juſt and wiſe. — Indeed,

The Uſe of this Maxim is ſo general, and the Occaſion of having Recourſe to it ſo frequent, that Experience only can ſhew its juſt Importance.

Add to this, the diſtinguiſhing Properties and Advantages of it. — As firſt,

It is a Precept particularly fitted for Practice, as it involves in the very Notion of it a Motive, ſtirring us up to do what it enjoins. Other moral Maxims propoſe naked Truths to the Underſtanding, which operate often but faintly and ſlowly on the Will and Paſſions, the two active Principles of the Mind of Man: but it is the peculiar Character of This, that it addreſſeth

(*) "To deal with others as you deſire to be dealt with yourſelf," is a Catholicon, which refuſes Sanction to Vice, every where alike; indeed, Hiſtory will tell us, that its Influence is not excluded from Wilds and Deſerts. Set a Man out of the Reach of human Laws, and let him but aſk his Conſcience, whether what he is going to do, be eſſential Good or Evil, and he need not fear having a ſatisfactory Anſwer.

addreſſeth itſelf equally to all theſe Powers; imparts both Light and Heat; and, at the ſame Time that it informs us certainly and clearly what we are to do, excites us alſo, in the moſt tender and moving Manner, to the Performance of it. We can ſee our Neighbour's Misfortune without a ſenſible Degree of Concern, which yet we cannot forbear expreſſing when we have once made his Condition our own, and determined the Meaſure of our Obligation towards him, by what we ourſelves ſhould, in ſuch a Caſe, expect from him. Our Duty grows immediately our Intereſt and Pleaſure by the Means of this powerful Principle, the Seat of which is, in Truth, not more in the Brain than in the Heart of Man: it appeals to our very Senſes, and exerts its ſecret Force in ſo prevailing a Way, that it is even felt, as well as underſtood by us.

But further, As this Rule is of infinite Service, ſo it is alſo of vaſt and comprehenſive Influence; it extends to all Ranks and Conditions of Men, and to all Kinds of Action and Intercourſe between them; to Matters of Charity, Generoſity, and Civility, as well as Juſtice; to negative, no leſs than to poſitive Duties; the Ruler and the ruled are alike ſubject to it; publick Communities can no more exempt themſelves from its Obligation, than private Perſons. "All Perſons muſt fall down before it, all Nations muſt do it

Service." (*) It is a moſt comprehenſive Rule, containing the Whole Duty of Man to his Neighbour, and is applicable to every Occurrence of ſocial Life. All the Commandments in the ſecond Table are comprized in this, "Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf;" (i.e) thou ſhalt conſider him as another ſelf, and do to him as thou wouldſt be done by.

Again, This Precept is adapted to all Capacities; every One knows what his Expectations are from Mankind, and from thence can readily inform himſelf what Mankind expect from him. It is alike eaſy and obvious to all Underſtandings, to the meaneſt and moſt ignorant of Men, as well as thoſe of the greateſt Parts, and moſt refined Improvements: indeed, it is not only evident and acknowledged, but it is felt by all; for it is conſtantly accompanied with a Senſe of Duty, or a Conſciouſneſs of its Obligation, which riſes in us as it were by Inſtinct, and ſeems to be the Impulſe of Providence,

(*) There never was any Law, human or divine, that hath been more univerſally received and acknowledged than this general Rule & Maxim of our Lord. It hath been admired by Jews, Gentiles, & Chriſtians, by Men of all Ages, Countries, Sects, Qualities, and Conditions. The Reaſon of it is as clear as the Light, the Date of it as ancient as Mankind, and its Obligation as laſting as the Frame of human Nature. For, there neither is, nor ever was, a Precept of any Religion or Inſtitution, ſo exactly calculated for the Benefit of Mankind, and for the maintaining of Peace and Love, of Equity and Juſtice in the World, as this.

Providence, to quicken us in the Obſervance of it, Aſk the moſt illiterate Perſon, whether he ſhould not do to others as he would be done by, and he will not heſitate a Moment in his Anſwer; he is immediately ſtruck with the Truth, and feels himſelf ſtrictly bound to conform to it: the moſt ſelfiſh and ſordid Wretch, likewiſe, who hath been prevailed upon by ſome lucrative Views to act againſt this Rule, is ſo conſcious of its Rectitude and univerſal Approbation, that he dares not avow his own Practices, and ſtands convicted in his own Mind of his Iniquities. "God," on this, as well as other Accounts, "is no Reſpecter of Perſons," having made That, which is moſt neceſſary, moſt common; (*) and conſequently ſuited this Principle, which all Men have Occaſion to uſe, equally to the Apprehenſion of all Men. (‡) From

(*) There are few things very difficult to be found out, which are not uſeleſs when diſcovered: But God upon eaſy Terms, gives us the Knowledge of all things which pertain "to Life and Godlineſs."

If the induſtrious Mariners could find out the Cauſe of the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea, it does not ſeem that it would much advantage Navigation, and Trade; nor has the Diſcovery of the Circulation of the Blood contributed to the ſhortening the Bills of Mortality. If we could diſcover the exact Situation of Paradiſe, ſo vainly ſearched after by ſo many Writers, would that Diſcovery remove the Guard of Angels, that ſecure its Avenues? Nor if we knew by what Means the Sin Original is propagated, would that take away the Stain of it.

(‡) ——— ——— ——— *Semita certa*
Tranquillæ per Virtutem patet unica Vitæ.
Serm. CCV.

From our Participation of one common Nature, we are either in the ſame Circumſtances with our Brother or can readily imagine ourſelves in them; and from thence, can render ourſelves at all Times competent Judges of Equity in moſt Caſes that can happen between us. One and All have the ſame Laws of Nature, and the ſame Rules of Conduct; in thoſe Circumſtances therefore, where our Wants and Feelings are mutual and general, the Deſires of the Individual are the Deſires of the whole Species, and every Man is the true Repreſentative of his Neighbour, and the Epitome of all Mankind.

They, therefore, who are incapable of long Trains in Deductions of Reaſon, and of adapting the ſeveral Rules of Morality to the various Circumſtances of Action, are yet able, (equally with the acuteſt Philoſophers or Caſuiſts,) to look into their own Hearts, to ſee the Bent of their Inclinations, and the Force of their own Deſires towards themſelves, and ſo to act accordingly to others.

There cannot, therefore, be a clearer Demonſtration of the Importance of this divine Precept, than the Preparation which our all-juſt Creator hath thought fit to make for the Practice of it, by inſpiring every Breaſt with an intuitive Knowledge of it, and placing ſuch a ſtrong Biaſs upon the Mind to draw us towards

it,

it, that we muſt offer much Violence to our Judgement and Conſcience before we can turn ourſelves from it. — Again,

Another Advantage of this Rule, is, that it is eaſy of Acceſs.

It is not enough that a Rule, which is to be of general Uſe, is ſuited to our Nature; ſo that, when offered, we readily embrace it: but it muſt alſo be apt to offer itſelf to our Thoughts, and lie ready for preſent Uſe, upon all Emergencies and Occaſions. And ſuch, remarkably ſuch, is That which our Lord hath here recommended to us.

We can ſcarce be ſo ſurpriſed by any immediate Neceſſity of acting, as not to have Time for a ſhort Recourſe to it; Room for a ſudden Glance, as it were, upon it, in our Minds, where it reſts and ſparkles always. There is no Occaſion for us to go in Search of it to the Oracles of the Law, dead or living; to the Code or Pandects; to the Volumes of Divines or Moraliſts; we need look no further than ourſelves for it: (*) for, (to uſe the appoſite Expreſſions of Moſes,)

"This Commandment which I command thee this Day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Who ſhall go up for us to Heaven and bring it unto us, that we may

(*) *Quod petis hic eſt.* Serm. CCV.

may hear it, and do it. Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Who ſhall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it. But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou mayeſt do it."

Again, — Another Advantage of this Rule, is, that it is eaſy to be underſtood.

Human Laws are often ſo numerous as to eſcape our Memories; (*) and ſometimes ſo darkly and inconſiſtently worded, as to puzzle the Underſtanding; and their original Obſcurity is not ſeldom improved by the nice Diſtinctions & ſubtle Reaſonings of thoſe who profeſs to clear them: (‡) ſo that under theſe ſeveral Diſadvantages they loſe much of their Force & Influence;

(*) Too many Laws are a Snare, too few are a Weakneſs in Government, too gentle are never obeyed, and too ſtrict and ſevere are ſeldom executed. — *Ut in Morbis non nova ſunt tentanda Remedia, ſi veteribus Malo ſuccurri poſſit: ità, non ſunt condenda novæ Leges, ſi veteres miniſtrant aliquid, quo Rei-pub. Malis mediaris. Quemadmodum ubi multi ſunt Medici, ibi multi etiam Morbi; ità, ubi permulti Leges, ibi plurimum eſt Vitiorum.*

(‡) *Orator improbus Leges ſubvertit.*

It is with Juſtice, as with ſick Men: in Time paſt, when we had few Doctors, as well of Law, as of Phyſick, we had more Right and more Health. But we are now deſtroyed by Multitudes and Conſultations, which ſerve to no other End, than to inflame both the Diſtemper and the Reckoning.

Influence; and, in ſome Caſes, perhaps, raiſe more Diſputes than they determine. (*) But

(*) *Nodum in Scirpo quærunt. Rem explicatam perturbant. Summum Jus eſt ſumma Injuria.*

Scientia, quæ eſt remota a Juſtitiâ, Calliditas potius quàm Sapientia eſt appellanda. — The Groſs of Mankind can neither be their own Counſellors in Matters of human Law without Prejudice to their temporal Intereſts; nor their own Caſuiſts in Matters of divine Law without Hazard to their ſpiritual; nor at any Time competent Judges in their own Caſe.

Hence ariſes a Neceſſity that ſome Men ſhould apply themſelves in a particular Manner to the Study of theſe Laws, and to get therein ſuch Knowledge as may enable them to adviſe thoſe who ſhall conſult them, what may be done with Safety in Points of Law, or Conſcience.

To invite Applications to them for their Advice, they profeſs themſelves ready and able to give it. The higher are their Stations, and the greater their Reputation for Skill in their ſeveral Profeſſions, the greater is their Authority and Influence of their Opinions and Doctrines.

If they miſlead, how many do they miſlead? And if thoſe who are miſled are Men of Power, how fatal, how extenſive may be the Miſchief of the Error?

Hiſtories will ſufficiently inform us, that Illegalities warranted to be Law, and indefenſible Tenets preſſed upon the Conſcience for Goſpel, by their reſpective great Profeſſors, have ſubverted Kingdoms.

But what could be a ſufficient Motive? Naturally, if there be no Bias upon the Mind, Men chuſe to ſay what they really think, and it is with Reluctance that they ever bring themſelves to ſay otherwiſe. No other Motive hath appeared, than to gratify the mean Appetite, which they could not forego, to a greater Fortune, or a higher Station, by pleaſing Men, who could enrich them, or advance them.

But "do they ſeek to pleaſe Men? If they yet ſeek to pleaſe Men, they will not be the Servants of Chriſt."

But here is a Law attended with none of theſe Inconveniencies; the groſſeſt Minds can ſcarce miſapprehend it; the weakeſt Memories are capble of retaining it; no perplexing Comment can eaſily cloud it; the Authority of no Man's Gloſs upon Earth can, if we are but ſincere, ſway us to make a wrong Conſtruction of it; for, (to uſe the Expreſſion of the Evangelical

It is required both of the Diſpenſers of the Law of the Realm, and of "the ſtewards of the Myſteries of God, that Men be found faithful;" and, if they be not, "He that is higher than the higheſt, regardeth; and there be higner than they."

There can be no greater Injury to human Society, than that good Talents among Men ſhould be held honourable to thoſe who are endowed with them without any Regard how they are applied. The Gifts of Nature and the Accompliſhments of Art are only valuable, as they are exerted in the Intereſts of Virtue, or governed by the Rules of Honour.

If a Lawyer were to be eſteemed only as he uſes his Parts in contending for Juſtice, and were immediately deſpicable when he appeared in a Cauſe which he could not but know was an unjuſt one, how honourable would his Character be! and how honourable is it in ſuch among us, who follow the Profeſſion no otherwiſe, than as labouring to protect the injured, to ſubdue the Oppreſſor, to impriſon the careleſs Debtor, and do right to the painful Artificer: But many of this excellent Character are overlooked by the greater Number; who affect covering a weak Place in a Client's Title, diverting the Courſe of an Injury, or finding a ſkilful Refuge to palliate a Fallehood: yet it is ſtill called Eloquence in the Latter, tho thus unjuſtly employed: But, Reſolution in an Aſſaſſine, is, according to Reaſon, quite as laudible, as Knowledge and Wiſdom, exerciſed in the Defence of an ill Cauſe.

Evangelical Prophet,) "It is an High-way, and the way-faring Man, tho a Fool, ſhall not err therein: he that runneth may read it. (*)

Upon all which Accounts it is, that it hath been ſo univerſally received: Jews, Gentiles, and Chriſtians, freely aſſenting to it. — Again,

As it is eaſy of Acceſs, and to be underſtood; ſo it is alſo in every Man's Power to practiſe it.

It is eaſy for any One to know what he wills from his

(*) *Luce clarius, omnibus patet.*

Our Bleſſed Saviour, tho he was a Teacher ſent from God, and underſtood all Myſteries and all Knowledge, yet clouded not his heavenly Doctrine with any of thoſe curious Speculations and profound Subtilties by which the Schools of the Philoſophers and Rabbies engaged the Veneration of their Followers, but was plain and ſimple, ſpeaking to the Underſtandings of Men. Here therefore, our Duty may eaſily be known, if a Man is but willing to be informed. And, to acquit ourſelves fairly in this Matter, there is generally required no great Reach of Thought, no refined Underſtanding, nor Advantage of Education. We need not turn over the Pandects, nor tire ourſelves with Statutes and Reports: It was Diſhoneſty, more than the Weakneſs of Mankind, which occaſioned theſe Volumes. Did not deſigning Men make it their Buſineſs to ſtart Ambiguities, to entangle Honeſty, and lay in wait to deceive, moſt Men might be their own Lawyers. — See Knox's Eſſays, No. 112. Hints to thoſe who are deſigned for the Profeſſion of the Law. And No. 21. of the Spectator, with the laſt Letter in No. 372.

If in doubtful Caſes, Men would aſk their Reaſon a few Queſtions, and try the Uſage of their Neighbours on themſelves, the World would ſeldom have any juſt Ground to complain of them.

his Neighbour; and there is no other Difficulty, but in making himself as willing to do the same to him. A ready Mind is all that is required of us, and who can hinder us from it? Every Man may be as honest and as just as he pleases; here lies his Strength; He is subject to no Compulsion or Restraint from without, and where Nature operates freely, he is disposed towards it from within, and nothing but inordinate Passions or Lusts can rob him of this Liberty.

Again, — Another Advantage of this Rule, is, that it is in an especial Manner calculated for the Suppression of the Prejudices and Partialities which Self-interest is apt to raise within us. It is a general Rule in all Courts of Equity, that no Man should sit as a Judge in his own Cause, or be admitted as an Evidence where he is a Party concerned; and the Reason is, because Self-love, the leading Principle in human Nature, frequently makes Men partial to themselves: there is indeed an inseparable Connection between Justice and true Interest, and were we always to pursue the One, we should never deviate from the Other; but there is an apparent or false, as well as a real and true Interest; that is, we may err in our Judgment, and take the Appearance for the Reality; and where Men are partial to themselves they will be prejudiced against others; hence it comes to pass, that there are

few

few capable of judging right in their own Cauſe. The great Uſe, therefore, of this Precept in the Text, is to remove theſe Obſtacles; and by diverting our Paſſions, and informing the Underſtanding, to qualify us for being Arbitrators between our Neighbour and Ourſelves; for which Purpoſe, it takes us as it were out of ourſelves, or ſeparates our Reaſon from our Paſſions, by ſuppoſing our Deſires or Actions to be another's; and Intereſt and Paſſion being thus detached from us, we view them with Indifference, and judge of them as impartially, as if they were another's. — But,

Laſtly, The Weight of Prejudices and Partialities is not only taken-off by the Means of this Precept, but in moſt Caſes there is more done by it: it ſets our benevolent Affections to work, it brings us to ſympathize with our Neighbour, and by our perſonating him, and placing ourſelves in his Circumſtances, it retains Self-love for his Advocate, and brings it to plead his Cauſe, by preſſing us to the Diſcharge of our Duty to him, and the Abatement of our Demands from him.

But the Power of this Rule will be beſt exemplified, from a ſpecial Application of it, to ſome general Circumſtances in which we may be placed, with Reſpect to one another. — But Theſe, &c. will be the Subject of our next.

Sermon

SERMON CCVI.

On the ſame Subject.
Caſes and Examples ſtated.

Matt. vii. 12. "Whatſoever ye would that Men "ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for "this is the Law and the Prophets."

Having already ſhewn the Excellency of this Rule, and the ſeveral Properties and Advantages of it, I am now to exemplify it, by a ſpecial Application of it, to ſome general Circumſtances, in which we may be placed, with Reſpect to one another.

As, firſt, when our Neighbour ſeems to be violently ſet againſt us and to threaten us with ſome Injury, let us then apply this Rule, by ſubſtituting ourſelves in his Place; and ſuppoſing ourſelves to be the angry Perſon; and upon this Suppoſition, let us inquire, "Whether our Neighbour hath not uſed us ill? Hath he not aſperſed our Character, and raiſed ſome falſe & ſcandalous Stories to our Prejudice? Hath he not abuſed our Perſon or injured our Property? Do not

we do well, therefore, to be angry with him? Doth not Prudence preſcribe Reſentment, and Self-defence call us to retaliate upon him for the Prevention of any future Inſults."

Upon this Scrutiny into our Conduct towards our Neighbour, when thus ſet at a Diſtance from us, and ſuppoſed to be our Neighbour's towards us, we ſhall probably find that we have given him juſt Provocation, and that he hath good Reaſon to be out of Humour with us. Inſtead, therefore, of repeating the Affront, and heaping Coals upon his Fire, we ſhall be led from this Examination of our paſt Conduct, into a Senſe and Acknowledgement of our Miſbehaviour towards him; and ſhall endeavour to extinguiſh his Enmity and recover his Favour, by a proper Submiſſion and ready Proffer of our future good Offices.

Or, at leaſt, this Subſtitution will have this good Effect, by putting us to ſearch narrowly into own Behaviour, it will prevent us from catching the Flame from his Anger, it will cool our Reſentment, and contribute, in ſome Degree, towards our doing to our Adverſary, no more than what we ſhould think right to be done to us. — Again,

Thirdly, When we are going to be the Aggreſſors, & our Hands are lifted up againſt our Neighbour, let us for a while ſuſpend the Stroke, let us change Places

with him, and conſider ourſelves as going to be aſſaulted by him: in this Situation let us aſk, "What Reaſon he can have for uſing ſuch violent Means with us; have we offended him? If it be but once, ſurely that can never deſerve ſuch a ſevere Return; indeed, if we have offended him often, would it not be much better for him to repeat his Forgiveneſs, and to try all fair Means, before he proceeded to Extremities? Reſiſtance will harden us; but we ſhall be melted by Forbearance; and we cannot continue to be long at Variance with him, who is determined not to be at Enmity with us.

But if no Affront hath been offered, or Provocation given, then; "How ſhould we like to have ſuch a Perſon for our Neighbour, who, though we have never offended him, and though it be contrary both to his Duty and his Intereſt, will not live at Peace with us, but take an unnatural Pleaſure in reeking his Ill-nature or Malice upon us? If we are injured in our Perſon, our Fortune, or Character, are we not touched in an extremely ſenſible Part? Will it not provoke our keeneſt Reſentment, and turn us from a Friend into a deſperate Enemy?"

"As we are Members, likewiſe, of the Community, are not Offences againſt us Breaches of Civil Juſtice? are not our private Wrongs publick Injuries? And,

do

do not we think the Authors of them to be the Peſts of Society, and highly puniſhable by the Laws both of God and Man?"

But, doth the Difference of Perſons alter the Caſe? Is not our Neighbour's Fortune, his Perſon, and his Character, as dear to him as our's can be to us? Hath he not the ſame exquiſitely tender Feelings with us? And is there not the ſame Provocation to Reſentment? Do we not violate the ſame Laws of Juſtice? And is not the Peace of Society as much endangered by our Contentions as by our Neighbour's? And are we not as much obnoxious to the ſame human and divine Penalties?

Such Tranſpoſitions and Interrogatories as theſe, cannot fail of diſarming our Ill-will againſt our Neighbour, and raiſing in us a juſt Senſe of our Obligation to Peace and Amity. — But,

3dly, When our Neceſſities or Diſtreſſes call up our Expectations, and make us importunate for Aſſiſtance from our Neighbour, then let us apply this Rule, and ſuppoſe ourſelves in his Circumſtances; let us aſſume his Character, and enter into his Part as if we were to act in it; let us aſk ourſelves upon this ſuppoſed Change, what Abilities we then have? What Relation do we bear to ſuch or ſuch a Perſon? Have we not nearer Friends, and more neceſſitous Depen-

dents, who have a better Claim to our Services? And would it not be depriving them of our Charity to beſtow it upon others.

By Theſe, and ſuch like Inquiries, we ſhall confront our own Deſires; and by thus informing ourſelves what is reaſonable for our Neighbour to give, we ſhall learn what is proper for us to expect, and ſhall judge candidly of him.

4thly and laſtly, When our Brother is labouring under any ſore Affliction or Diſtreſs, let us ſet the Glaſs before us, and behold ourſelves ſtruggling under the ſame Calamity. — How then do we perceive the Duties of Humanity, and our Title to the Aſſiſtance of our Fellow-creatures? How ſtrongly are theſe Obligations imprinted upon our Mind? Do not we wonder how any One can be ſo inſenſible of our Miſeries, as to paſs by us unconcerned? How welcome is any friendly Relief? How ſhall we bleſs the Hand from whence it comes? and with the warmeſt Gratitude adore our Benefactor?

But is not our Brother the ſame miſerable Spectacle in thoſe Circumſtances that we ſuppoſed ourſelves to be? Do we not ſee him agonizing under the ſame Pains, and languiſhing in the ſame helpleſs Manner? Are not his Calls for Aſſiſtance as loud, and his Title to it as good as ours? Doth not the Balm that is poured

poured into his Wounds assuage his Pains as much as it doth ours? And doth not Relief come as seasonable to him, and meet with the same cordial Reception? And, lastly, do not we see the Heart of the succoured, like our own, dancing for Joy, and the Blessing of him that was ready to perish poured forth as fervently upon his Deliverer?

Hence, by drawing a Picture of our Brother from ourselves, and ourselves from our Brother, and viewing them in the same Light, and comparing them together, we learn to forgive an Enemy; – to forbear from Injuries, – to moderate our Expectations in Distresses, – and to commiserate the Afflicted.

Thus I have attempted to set before you some of the general Uses that are to be made of this divine Precept, and the Advantages that will accrue to us from the Application of it. I shall proceed, therefore, further to exhort and recommend the Practice of it. But, we have greatly anticipated this, in the Explication of it; and the displaying of its Uses and Advantages have almost rendered any futher Recommendation needless. For,

What more powerful Motives can there be urged for the Practice of it, than that it is founded upon the first Principles of Equity and Truth; – that it is

Level to all Capacities; – that we cannot be deceived by it; – that we are in the Right when we act by it; – and that our Reaſon immediately aſſents; – our Conſcience preſſes us to it; and it hath the Seal of univerſal Approbation.

Conſider, then, that we have no Excuſe for not practiſing it.

We cannot plead Ignorance, becauſe Common Senſe ſuggeſts it to us, and the World is continually appealing to, and reminding us of it; When we ſee others do Wrong, and eſpecially to ourſelves, do not we immediately fly to this Rule? – Do not we preſcribe the Application of it to them, as the moſt effectual Means to convince them of their Iniquity? – Do not we bid them reflect how they would be dealt by, and whether their Treatment of us is ſuch as they would expect from us? But if we are ſo ready to dictate it to others, why are we not as forward to recommend it to ourſelves? If we are ſenſible that it is the beſt Means for curbing our Neighbour's Extravagancies, we cannot but know that it will be as uſeful in checking our own.

We cannot plead Inability to put this Rule into Practice; we know what we deſire from others; and there is no Difficulty in putting ourſelves in another's Place, and learning what his Deſires are from us;

from

from hence, it is eaſy to balance our Deſires, and to act by them when ſo balanced: had our Taſk been ever ſo difficult, ought we not to have done our utmoſt towards the Performance of it? How much more ready then ought we to be, when only this compendious Rule is ſet before us; and nothing more is required of us, than to regulate our Practice by it.

But there is no Topic, by which this Rule can be urged with greater Advantage, than that of its removing the Prejudices and Partialities, which a falſe Judgment of Intereſt or inordinate Paſſion creates, and converting Self-love into an Advocate for our Neighbour; there cannot be a ſtronger Proof of the Weakneſs and Depravity of human Nature, than the Prepoſſeſſions which blind the Underſtanding, and bias the Will, in the cleareſt Matters of Juſtice and Duty: how frequently are Men impoſed upon by the Appearances of Intereſt; and how powerful are its Influences upon us? Daily Experience and Obſervation afford us too many Examples of it: now the beſt, and perhaps the only effectual Prevention of this Influence, is the Application of this Rule: a quick Senſe of Juſtice, and ſtrong Conſciouſneſs of Duty, are the Arms with which Provideuce hath arrayed us to defend ourſelves againſt the formidable Adverſaries, falſe Intereſt and Paſſion; it is incumbent upon us,

therefore, to be well verſed in the Uſe of them, and to have them always at Hand; that, when we are attacked by theſe Enemies, we may not be off our Guard, or inexpert in the Uſe of them.

Tho' no Man will diſpute the Equity of this Precept; yet, when our Attention is engroſſed by the Paſſions or Views of Intereſt, we may not immediately recollect it; we ſhould, therefore, do by it as the Iſraelites did by their Law; "we ſhould meditate upon it when we lie down, and when we riſe up;" we ſhould make it the daily Subject of our Converſation; we ſhould wear it about our Necks, and continually review the Characters of it upon our Hearts, that it may be always uppermoſt in our Thoughts, and offer itſelf to us upon every Occaſion. And,

What ſhould, in an eſpecial Manner, induce us hereto, is the Perfection and Utility of it.

We can never think upon this Subject without a pleaſing Admiration of the Divine Wiſdom, which hath ſo amiably and excellently compriſed it.

How plain to every Comprehenſion; yet ſo perfect, that all the united Wiſdom of Man can contrive nothing more complete! How lovely alſo, to win us to our Duty by the moſt endearing Affection, and to derive our Obligations to mutual Good-will, from the mutual Relation we bear to each other.

How

How vain, how uſeleſs, would be the long Labours of Caſuiſts, and all the Preciſion of Moral Theoriſts, if Men would bear this divine Precept, engraved, as it were, upon their Hearts; and unite in a brotherly Concern, and ſympathetic Tenderneſs for each other's Welfare! — And,

As it tends to the moſt perfect private Felicity, ſo it is equally calculated to promote the Peace of Society, and to advance the publick Tranquility and Happineſs.

This one ſingle Rule, invariably purſued, (if the evil Paſſions of Men would ſuffer them invariably to purſue it,) could not fail to render Society delightful. Why it is not invariably purſued, may too eaſily be accounted for. But this is no Objection to the Rule itſelf; and we are only ſpeaking now of the Nature and Tendency of it.

Can we then injure, revile, defraud, oppreſs, or ruin another; can we work any Ill to our Brother? Nay rather, can we with-hold our Hand from doing him all the Good in our Power; ſhall we not readily aſſiſt, comfort, ſerve, ſupport, and render him all the Services we are able? Certainly, if we were Chriſtians indeed; if we believe in the Word of Chriſt; if we expect a future Reward; if we have any Dependence upon him, whoſe Love conſtrained him to die

for us; if we have any Reverence for the Word of God, or Love for ourſelves, we ſhall not only remember, but conſtantly conduct ourſelves by this complete Rule of univerſal Love. — But,

Laſtly, I am to ſee what Inferences can be drawn from what hath been ſaid. — And here,—

Various are the Uſes into which this important Truth, thus handled, is capable of being improved.

For, — From hence I might, in the firſt Place, take Occaſion to conſider, whether, and how far, the Precept here given be the Whole, not only of the Law and the Prophets, but of the Goſpel alſo; and what evangelical Duties there are, which ſeem, (as the Schools ſpeak,) to tranſcend it; to be, (as Myſteries are, in Reſpect of Reaſon,) not indeed againſt this great Principle, but above and beyond it; and ſuch as we cannot thoroughly account for, without taking the Conſideration of another World into our Schemes and Reaſonings.

I might, in the next Place, proceed to ſhew, how large a Share moral Truths have, even in the Body of revealed Doctrines, ſince the Precept of the Text, which comprehends only the Duty we owe to our Neighbour, is ſaid to be "the Law & the Prophets." An Expreſſion, not indeed to be taken rigorouſly, & in the Letter; but which may however be underſtood

to

to imply, that, as a great Part of Holy Writ is employed in directly preſſing the Duties abridged in this Precept, ſo the reſt of it plainly points and refers to them. Even the higheſt Myſteries of Faith were not made known to us, without ſome Regard to our Improvement in practical Virtues; and the Knowledge of thoſe, unleſs it tends to quicken our Obedience to theſe, will be of no Manner of Service to us, will neither better us in this World, nor ſave us in the next.

An Attention to this ſingle Precept, and a ſerious Conſideration of its extenſive Utility will ſuffice abundantly to ſhew the ſuperlative Excellence of the Morality of Chriſt above that of all other Teachers; and conſequently will ſuggeſt to us a very ſtrong and convincing Argument in behalf of the Divine Miſſion of the Meſſiah. — Again,

From the Aſſertion in the Cloſe of the Text, it may be yet further and more clearly inferred, that there is a Chain of moral Reaſoning, by which the ſeveral Duties of the ſecond Table are joined together, & have an orderly Dependence on one common Principle, out of which they were drawn. That Virtue, therefore, is not the blind Homage of our Nature, arbitrarily exacted from us, but a Duty fitted and proportioned to the Light of our Faculties, and every Way our "reaſonable Service;" In a Word, that Morality is a true

and proper Science, and all the Parts of it capable of ſtrict Demonſtration.

An Obſervation of manifold and excellent Uſe! for it teaches us to reject the Pretences of thoſe vain and fanciful Enthuſiaſts, who have framed a Rule of Duty to themſelves, as contrary to the common Senſe and Reaſon, as it is to the Current Language of Mankind; ſo refined and ſublime, as to be utterly unintelligible and impracticable. It is not to be learned or confuted, in the Method of other Doctrines: it is to be made out only by the Force of ſome unaccountable Impreſſions; by a Light that ſhines inward, and which cannot be communicated or diſcovered. But "we have not ſo learned Chriſt;" on the contrary, we are aſſured, that we do our Lord and Maſter good Service, ſuch as he will own and reward, when we apply ourſelves to eſtabliſh the Truths of our Religion upon Principles of Reaſon, and to argue Men into their Duty by appealing to natural Light, to the Certainty of firſt Principles, and to the evident Deductions which may from thence be made by the ſure Rules of Diſcourſe; and that we are not to regard the Cenſures of thoſe, who, on this Account, ſhall ſtile us mere Moral Teachers and carnal Reaſoners, but will not allow us to ſpeak by the Spirit, or to be at all acquainted with the Life and Power of Godli-

neſs;

neſs; as if Religion were a thing deſigned not to be underſtood or made out, but loſt ſomewhat of its native Majeſty and Force, when once we came to reaſon upon it. — But further, — (and equally in Confution of the preceeding,)

Tho this Maxim is not properly a Rule of Religion towards God, but the Motive and Meaſure of our Duty towards our Neighbour; yet it is of ſo great Authority, that without a peculiar Regard to it in our Intercourſe with Men, the moſt glorious Pretences of Piety towards God will but little avail.

Men, by a mighty Zeal about Opinions, without Regard to Equity, Juſtice, or Mercy, neither honour God, nor benefit the World, nor gain reputation to themſelves. (*)

To be devout in any Form of Worſhip, without Honeſty and Ingenuity in our Dealings, is, at beſt, but acting the Part of an Hypocrite, without any true Notion or Senſe of Religion. To profeſs and make a Shew, though of the greateſt Zeal, without a proper Regard to this Rule, will but make us ſuſpected of the greater Deceit. (†) He

(*) Value no Man for his Opinion, but eſteem him according as his Life correſponds with the Rules of Juſtice and Honeſty: for a Man's Actions, not his Conceptions, render him valuable. *Fructu, non Foliis, Arborem æſtima.* — See Note (z) Vol. vi. Page 330.

(†) Devotion, which is not grounded on Chriſtian Humility and Love of our Neighbour, is no better than Form and Pretence.

He who neglects the weightier Matters of Faith, Juſtice, and Mercy, can have no Pretence to Chriſtianity: "God loves Mercy more than Sacrifice," and is better pleaſed with our equitable Dealing, than with the moſt rich and coſtly Sacrifices.

But further, — The general Practice of the Rule before us will of itſelf neceſſarily conduce to the Benefit & Happineſs of Mankind; for, if This was duly obſerved, no Injuries would be offered at all, nor Requeſts made but what were reaſonable, and none denied but what were not fit to be granted; and we ſhould univerſally live loving and beloved of all Men, as hereby wholly benefiting the whole Race of Mankind, as Opportunity offers. — Upon the Whole,

It would be no unprofitable Reflection, nor mean Motive to induce us hereto, to obſerve from hence the great Benignity and Goodneſs of God, who hath made even our own Will, and our Self-love, a complete Law of Action, and Meaſure of Duty to us. "All things whatſoever ye would (i.e) whatever ye are willing,) that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them." — Surely, with exceeding Propriety did our Saviour ſay, "my Yoke is eaſy, and my Burden is light."

We may be averſe, perhaps, from ſubmitting to the Divine Will, or to the Will of any of our Fellow-

low-creatures exerciſing Authority over us; but can we be otherwiſe than contented and pleaſed in ſubmitting to OUR OWN Will, whatever it is? And yet, a Submiſſion to That, (when regulated by proper Circumſtances and Views,) is all that is required of us.

In a Word, — Since the Precept before us hath all the Signs of being a Law of Nature, or rather of the God of Nature, by being founded upon the firſt Principles of Equity; by being deeply imprinted upon the human Mind, and adapted to all Capacities and Powers; ſince it is a Doctrine of Revelation, contained in the Law and the Prophets, and enjoined in the Goſpel; if then, as Men, ye have any Love for Juſtice, or any Regard for your Duty to your Maker; or, if as Chriſtians ye hold yourſelves bound by a Law which our Saviour came to fulfil, and which he hath expreſsly commanded; you will make it your principal Care "to do to all Men, as ye would they ſhould do unto you."

To Conclude:— This Precept, though "worthy of all Acceptation," — "though worthy of all Men to be received," on Account of its ſuperlative Excellence; yet our Saviour, (more ſtrongly to enforce it,) adds a very powerful and cogent Reaſon: for, to do this, (ſays he,) is all that the Law and the Prophets

require, "This is the Law and the Prophets:" (i.e) whatever Rules of the ſecond Table are delivered in the Law of Moſes, or in the larger Comments and Explanations of That Law, made by the other Writers of the Old Teſtament, (here and elſewhere ſtiled the Prophets,) however diſperſed or variouſly inculcated, are all virtually compriſed in this one ſhort ſignificant Saying "Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them." – From This, as from their common Source, they were all originally derived, and into This they may be all ultimately reſolved – "for, all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in This, thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf." Conſequently, the Whole is fulfilled by it, ſo far as it relates to our mutual Behaviour.

May we then, (conſtantly bearing in Mind the Excellency of this golden Rule, or Law of univerſal Equity,) deal out good Offices plentifully to our Brethren, "even as we would that they ſhould unto us;" for, by ſo doing, "an Entrance will be miniſtered unto us abundantly," not only into the good Things of this Life, but alſo "into the everlaſting Kingdom of God."

Sermon

SERMON CCVII.

Againſt Uncharitableneſs, Unmercifulneſs, Hard-heartedneſs, &c.

2 Tim. iii. 3. "Without natural Affection."

We have here, (by the Apoſtle,) laid before us a long Catalogue of Offences, not of the leaſt, but rather of the greateſt Malignity, and moſt deformed Aſpect, which ſhall come upon Men in the laſt Days; among which "Want of natural Affection" obtains a Place, being the laſt of that which commonly remains in Men; being not ſo much a Virtue, as a natural Principle. When a Man puts-off this, we may give him up for loſt to all Manner of Goodneſs.

To be "without natural Affection," then, is to be devoid of every Grace, and will juſtly bring us into Condemnation.

This I ſhall endeavour to make appear under the following Particulars:

Firſt, That Unmercifulneſs and Uncharitableneſs to the Poor is a great Sin.

Secondly,

Secondly, That ſuch a Sin, though alone, and without any other Guilt, is ſufficient to our Ruin for ever.

As to the firſt, it is no ſingle Sin, but contains in it Inhumanity and Impiety: and firſt,

Inhumanity: It is an Argument of a cruel and ſavage Diſpoſition, not to pity thoſe that are in Need and Neceſſity; and he doth not pity the Miſery of others really, and in juſt Conſtruction, that doth not relieve them, when he hath both the Ability and Opportunity by him. (*)

To ſee Men, like ourſelves, "Bone of our Bone, and Fleſh of our Fleſh," labour under Want and Neceſſity, and yet not be moved to commiſerate them, is, (as much as in us lies,) to put-off our own Nature, and be hard-hearted to it, and ſo, (in ſome Senſe,) do what the Apoſtle ſays, "no Man ever yet did, hate his own Fleſh." — And,

This the Scripture ſpeaks of as the greateſt Inhumanity, and calls it Murder: "whoſo hateth his Brother is a Murderer;" and not to relieve him when in Want and Neceſſity is to hate him.

"Whoſo hath this World's Goods, and ſeeth his Brother hath need, and ſhutteth up his Bowels of Compaſſion from him, how dwelleth Love in him?"

But further, — It is not only Cruelty to our Brother,

(*) *Re opitulandum, non Verbis.*

ther, but to ourselves also; for, seest thou a poor Man in Want and Necessity, in Need and Misery, there is nothing that hath befallen him but what is common to Man, and is what may be our own Lot and Portion one Day or other. (*) In being therefore cruel to him in his Need, we hereby "teach Men an evil Lesson against ourselves," when we shall at any Time sue for Favour from them.

This is the first Aggravation of this Sin, the Inhumanity and Folly of it. — But,

Secondly, Besides this, it is a great Impiety towards God.

Unmercifulness to the Poor hath this fourfold Impiety in it; it is a Contempt of God; — it is an Usurpation upon his Right, — a slighting of his Providence, and a plain Demonstration that we do not love God, and that all our Pretences to Religion are hypocritical and insincere.

First, It is a Contempt of God, and a reproaching of his Providence. So says Solomon: "He that oppresseth the Poor reproacheth his Maker;" (i.e) doth all that in him lies to deface the Image of God that is impressed in him, and to ground that Objection which is but too frequently and falsely asserted, that "God

(*) *Omnium Rerum Vicissitudo est. Fortuna nunquam perpetuo est bona. Semel in Anno videt Apollo.* Serm. CCVII.

"God takes not ſufficient Care of his Creatures."

But further, — The Uncharitable Man is an Uſurper upon God's Right. "The Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulneſs thereof, and He hath given it to the Children of Men;" not abſolutely, but only in Truſt.

In Reſpect of other Men, we are indeed true Proprietors of what we have; but in Reſpect of God we are but Stewards, who will exact an Account of us how we have demeaned ourſelves in it. (†)

Let us not, therefore, greedily retain to ourſelves alone theſe Gifts of the Lord, which were deſigned as Bread for the Hungry, and as Relief for the Needy and Oppreſſed, (*) but deal out plentifully to every Man as he hath need, "as the Lord hath proſpered us." — Again,

The uncharitable Man is impious in ſlighting of God's Providence. He doth not conſider that Riches and Poverty are from the Lord; (‡) "that he caſteth the Mighty down from their Seat, and exalteth the humble and meek;" that "he filleth the Hungry with good things, and the Rich he ſendeth empty away."

God's Providence could eaſily have diſpoſed of things

(†) All Perſons of Property are but in Effect Truſtees for the Benefit of their Family and the Diſtreſſed, and will be ſo reckoned when they are to give an Account. There is more Satisfaction in doing than in receiving Good; and to help thoſe in Trouble, is in ſome Meaſure doing the Work of God and Providence. It is better to be of the Number of thoſe who need Relief, than of thoſe who have the Means, but want Hearts to give it.

poſſideas.

things otherwiſe, and ſecured every Man from Want; but how then ſhould the different Offices of a civil and good Life be performed? God hath on Purpoſe ordered this Variety of Conditions, that there might be an Opportunity for the ſeveral Exerciſes of Life, of Love and Virtue, to appear, (i.e) that the Poor might thereby manifeſt their Dependance on God, and their Patience and Submiſſion to his Will, and that the Rich might ſhew their Temperance, Moderation, and Charity; and ſo mutually contribute to the general Good.

Laſtly, Unmercifulneſs to the Poor is a plain Demonſtration that we do not love God, and that all our other Pretences to Religion are hypocritical and inſincere.

St. James tells us, that "pure Religion before God and the Father is This, to viſit the Fatherleſs and the Widow in their Affliction," and that "the Wiſdom which is from above is full of Mercy and good Works."

St. John repreſents this uncharitable Diſpoſition as utterly inconſiſtent with the true Love of God: "Whoſo hath this World's Goods, and ſeeth his Brother hath Need, and ſhutteth up his Bowels of Compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?" — Indeed,

"God takes not ſufficient Care of his Creatures."

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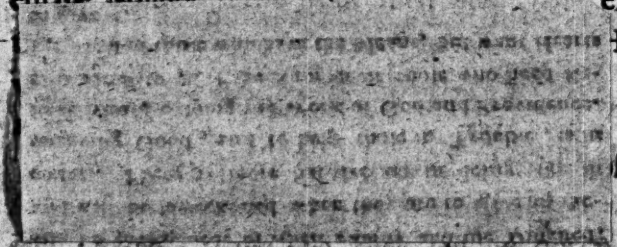

Hungry
empty
ſed of
things

(*) *Commune quod eſt, ne tuum ſolum dicas. Ne injuſtè Opes poſſideas.*

(‡) *Nemo Magnus ſine aliquo Afflatu divino unquàm fuit.*
See Eccl. xi. 11, &c.

things otherwiſe, and ſecured every Man from Want; but how then ſhould the different Offices of a civil and good Life be performed? God hath on Purpoſe ordered this Variety of Conditions, that there might be an Opportunity for the ſeveral Exerciſes of Life, of Love and Virtue, to appear, (i.e) that the Poor might thereby manifeſt their Dependance on God, and their Patience and Submiſſion to his Will, and that the Rich might ſhew their Temperance, Moderation, and Charity; and ſo mutually contribute to the general Good.

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He tells us that it is IMPOSSIBLE that ſuch a Man ſhould love God: "If a Man ſay, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Lyar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen?"

This deſerves to be ſeriouſly conſidered by thoſe who make a great ſhew of Devotion, but yet are defective in the great Point and Duty of Love, leſt, (with the young Man in the Goſpel,) after they have kept all other Commandments, they be rejected by Chriſt for "lack of this One thing."

Thus it appears, that to be "without natural Affection" is a great Sin. — But,

Secondly, It is ſuch a Sin as alone, and without any other Guilt, is ſufficient to deſtroy us for ever.

The Scripture is full of ſevere Threatenings againſt it: "Whoſo ſtoppeth his Ears at the Cry of the Poor, he alſo ſhall cry himſelf, and ſhall not be heard."

God himſelf will have no Regard or Pity for the Man that is regardleſs of another's Want, declaring in the moſt poſitive Terms that the Form and Manner of our Conduct, the Mode and Meaſure of it, will be again duly obſerved in his Dealings towards us, — and in the Dealings of all Men, one towards another.

"With whatever Meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again;" - and, that "all ſhall have Judgment

ment without Mercy, who themſelves have ſhewed no Mercy."

Our Saviour hath two Parables to repreſent the Danger of this Sin to us, [viz] that of the Rich Man, and the other of the Covetous, who enlarged his Barns to contain his Store; and the Moral of Both, are, "ſo is every Man that layeth up Store for himſelf, and is not rich towards God:" which we can only be, by the good Works of Mercy and Charity in particular, God having expreſsly declared that theſe things he takes as done to himſelf; but looks upon every unjuſt Contempt, and with-holding the good things of this Life from our Brethren, as a direct Contempt and Want of Compaſſion, yea, even for his moſt ſacred Perſon: in the former Inſtance declaring, that "inaſmuch as ye have done it to the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have done it to me;" and in the latter, "inaſmuch as ye have not done it to the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have not done it to me." "Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting Fire; for I was hungry, and ye gave me no Meat; thirſty, and ye gave me no Drink; naked, and ye cloathed me not; ſick, and in Priſon, and ye miniſtered not unto me. Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels."

Thus to be "without natural Affection," to be

hard-hearted and ſevere, without either "Bowels of Compaſſion," or Fellow-feeling for the Wants, for the Sufferings and Calamities of others, and to be unaffected Spectators of other Men's Neceſſities; or at the leaſt, putting them off with Words only of Comfort, ſaying, "be ye warmed and filled," when we have it by us, without giving them Relief: this is a great and condemning Sin, and is what God will not fail, but will ſeverely puniſh; inaſmuch as it is a Sin both of Inhumanity and Impiety; – of Inhumanity to our Fellow-creatures, and Impiety to our great Creator, and therefore juſtly gains every Diſpleaſure both human and divine.

There are many Reaſons, beſides what have been already adduced, whereby to diſcourage from ſo great and pernicious an Evil.

The Diſgrace of it is no ſmall Argument againſt it; – the Evil we hereby gain to ourſelves is equally diſſuaſive from it; – every and all holy Examples tend to diſcourage it, and therefore, in all Ingenuity, we ſhould put-off ſo evil a Temper, that we may be cloathed with the contrary Affection, and ſo become an Honour and an Ornament to our Profeſſion, and anſwer the true End of our Creation in all Sociability of our Station, and gain to ourſelves the Love, the Praiſe, and Eſteem, of our Fellow-creatures, and,

(what

(what is ſtill more truly valuable,) the Love, the Praiſe, and Eſteem alſo of God, our Creator.

There is nothing which we value ourſelves more upon, than in that Dignity of Nature wherein the Almighty hath placed us; and the Capacity we have, of acting ſuitably to it. This is what diſtinguiſhes us from the inferior Part of the Creation, and makes us glory in our exalted Station.

There is ſcarce any Man but deſires to partake in this Privilege that is common to our Nature, and withal takes it as the greateſt Reproach to be thought beneath, or in any way to act contrary to it.

To ſuch Men, therefore, where other more lively Oracles & Arguments of greater Refinement cannot be admitted with Effect, we muſt refer "theſe very firſt Principles of Nature;" they act contrary to their Being, "without natural Affection."

"Men diſown it, as not of their Nature; they are aſhamed of it, as a Stranger to their Hearts. Do they not call it Inhumanity?" — It is againſt Nature, which, in its uncorrupt State, is ever generous and free. — But further,

Not only againſt Nature, but againſt ourſelves alſo do we act hereby.

The Chances and Viciſſitudes of Life are ſo various, that there is no certain Dependance upon the ſure

Continuance of our State. "The Man of Wealth to-day, may be a Beggar to-morrow," (*) and then how ſeverely ſhall we bewail that evil Leſſon which we have taught our Brethren againſt us; Want of Tenderneſs and Compaſſion for us! and what in ſuch a State can we expect, but to be dealt with according to our former Treatment, and to have Contempt caſt upon us without Mercy, who ourſelves have ſhewed no Mercy?

Theſe Inferences naturally flow from the firſt Deduction, [viz] the Inhumanity of the Defect before us; but, if we conſider it in the latter View, as Impiety alſo againſt God, what and how light are all former Conſiderations to what we muſt here expect?

God hath a peculiar Care, and is particularly watchful for good to the needy and neceſſitous; and therefore hath aſſured us that he will evil-requite thoſe who ſhall deal hardly with them, without Compaſſion; & will account it as Deſpight done to himſelf, & will accordingly amply recompence Tribulation to them.

"Inaſmuch

(*) The Day knoweth not what the Night may bring forth. "The Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong; neither Bread to the Wiſe, nor Riches to Men of Underſtanding; nor Favour to Men of Skill: but Time and Chance happen to them all." *Sors Domina Campi, Sors omnia verſat.* "He therefore that requireth good Turns, is mindful of That which may be hereafter; and when he falleth, he ſhall find a Stay."

" Inasmuch as ye have not done it to the least of these my Brethren, ye have not done it to me. Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels."

I shall Conclude with that excellent Counsel given us by the wise Son of Sirach.

" My Son, defraud not the Poor, and make not the needy Eye to wait long; – make not an hungry Soul sorrowful, neither provoke a Man in his Distress; add not more Trouble to an Heart that is vexed, and defer not to give to him that is in need." – " Reject not the Supplication of the afflicted, nor turn away thy Face from a poor Man, that the Face of the Lord be not turned away from thee. Turn not away thine Eye from the needy, and give him no Occasion to curse thee; for, if he curse thee in the Bitterness of his Soul, his Prayer shall be heard of him that made him."

Sermon

SERMON CCVIII.

On Mercifulneſs, Charity, Sympathy, Tenderneſs, Compaſſion, &c. in Oppoſition to Uncharitableneſs, &c.

Ephe. iv. 32. —— "Tender-hearted."

The amiable Spirit of our holy Religion appears in nothing more than in the Care it hath taken to enforce on Men the ſocial Duties of Life. This is One of the cleareſt Characteriſticks of its being a Religion whoſe Origin is divine; for every Doctrine which proceeds from the Father of Mercies will undoubtedly breath Benevolence and Humanity. This is the Scope of the Words before us, calculated to promote the Happineſs of others, by alleviating the Sorrows of our Fellow-creatures. — Indeed,

Tenderneſs and Compaſſion for the Sufferings of others is a Virtue ſo proper to our Nature, that it is, therefore, called Humanity, (*) as if it were eſſential to

(*) It is according to Nature to be merciful; for no Man that hath not diveſted himſelf of Humanity, can be hard-hearted to others, without feeling a Pain in himſelf.

to us, and as if without it we did not deſerve the Name of Men; Indeed, ſo far are we from being juſtified in any Want of Tenderneſs for Man, who is our Brother, that even the Brute-Creation have a Right and Title to our Pity and kind Uſage.

Compaſſion is an Emotion, of which we ought never to be aſhamed; graceful, (in Youth eſpecially,) is the Tear of Sympathy, and the Heart that melts at the Tale of Woe.

Let Stoic Pride ſhut up the Bowels of Mercy, and ſtop the Sluices of Compaſſion: a Chriſtian will not be aſhamed of the tender Senſations of Humanity, to "mourn with thoſe that mourn, and weep with thoſe that weep."

"Jeſus wept" – The Tear that was ſhed over the Sorrows of Jeruſalem, the prophetic Voice of Sympathy that mourned its approaching Ruin, give us a right to indulge a Senſibility of Pity, and teach us that ſuch Affections are not unwelcome to Heaven.

Indeed, — We are commanded as well by the Author of our Salvation, as his Apoſtles, to be full of Compaſſion: It is a Duty enjoined by Religion, as incumbent on Humanity: It is This that directs the Hand of Charity to relieve, and points out to Benevolence the Objects of Aſſiſtance. Without this, Charity is Oſtentation, and Munificence Hypocriſy.

Let not Eaſe and Indulgence, therefore, contract our Affections, and wrap us up in ſelfiſh Enjoyment, but let us accuſtom ourſelves to think of the Diſtreſſes of human Life, of the ſolitary Cottage, the dying Parent, and the weeping Orphan.

"Thou ſhalt not harden thy Heart, nor ſhut thy Hand from thy poor Brother, but thou ſhalt ſurely give unto him in the Day of his Need, and thine Heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him, becauſe that for This thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy Works."—Let us never ſport with Pain and Diſtreſs, nor treat even the meaneſt Inſect with wanton Cruelty. We have no Right to tyranize with either the Lives or Liberties of Creatures committed to our Truſt for far different, & gentle, Uſage.

The various Ways whereby but too many take Paſtime herein are too complicated to admit, here, of a Diſcuſſion, & withal are ſome of them ſo truly ſhocking and barbarous, as to need not to be named; (*) inſomuch,

(*) *Devorat abſentes, Simulacraque cerea fingit,*
Et miſerum tenues in Jecur urgit Acus.
——— ——— *Neſcia Flectii*
Barbaries, nec illeſum ſcelerata reliquit.
——— ——— *Nulli violenta pepercit*
Sævities, —— *Pietati inimica, reſiſtit*
Fletibus, et ſurdâ contemnit Verba precantûm
Auris. ——— ———

Hanc

inſomuch, that Perſons, who never heard of them, would hardly imagine that ſuch Practices could exiſt among Men of Senſe, who live in a civilized Nation, and call themſelves Chriſtians.

But, ſetting aſide the Cruelty of theſe Diverſions what Ruin has it brought often upon Families! — How many of the poorer Sort are often by theſe Means brought to the greateſt Straits! — How many of the higher Rank have forfeited their Eſtates, and entailed Poverty on their Poſterity by it. — Now,

When

Hunc nec longa Dies, Pietas nec mitigat ulla,
Nullis eſt motus. ——— ———
——— *Ferrum et Scopulos in Pectore geſtat.*
——— *In duri ſtat tibi Corde Silex.*
Mitius invenies quàm te Genus omne Ferarum:
——— *Duris genuit te Cautibus horrens*
Caucaſus, Hircanæque admorunt Ubera Tigres.
Ne Lapis, et Montes, innataque Rupibus altis
Robora, te ſævæ progenuêre Feræ.
——— *Tua ſunt Silicis circum Præcordia Venæ,*
Et rigidum Ferri Semina Pectus habet.
Pro te non duræ Montes, non Roboris duri,
Durior eſt Glacies: Pectore nulla tuo:
Non Adamas pro te durus, non Marmora dura
Duriciem vincunt nulla Metella tuam:
Sævior et triſti Buſiride, ſævior illo,
Qui falſum lento torruit Igne Bovem.
Pectore ſub noſtro, nec Mens tam barbara vivit,
Natus es e Scopulis, nutritus Lacte Ferinis.

Serm. CCVIII.

When ſuch Men as theſe commence Fathers and Heads of Families, what Kind of Morals can they be ſuppoſed to inſtill into their Children? — Can they be ſuppoſed to teach them Benevolence, Gratitude, Charity, Compaſſion, and the reſt of the ſocial Virtues? — are they proper Perſons

—— "To rear the tender Thought,
"To teach the young Idea how to ſhoot,
"And pour the freſh Inſtruction o'er the Mind?"

Alas, the contrary is but too evident. It may be ſaid, — "Are not all Creatures made for Man's Uſe?" But granting this, (which many of our Philoſophers will not admit,) does it follow from hence, that they were made to be the Objects of our wanton Cruelty?

Man is always ready to ſtile himſelf "Lord of the Creation;" but this Pride makes him forget that he hath a Maſter in Heaven, who regards him; and that he is a dependant Creature himſelf. "Exalt not thyſelf, therefore, to the Heavens; for lo, the Angels are above thee! nor diſdain thy Fellow-creatures and Inhabitants of the Earth for that they are beneath thee. Are they not the Work of the ſame Hand?"

"Thou who art happy, by the Mercy of thy Creator, how dareſt thou in Wantonneſs to put any of his Creatures to Torture? Beware that it return not upon thee."

"Revenge

"Revenge is deteſtable; what then is Cruelty? Lo, it poſſeſſeth the Miſchiefs of the other; but it wanteth even the Pretence of its Provocation.

"Men diſown it as not of their Nature; they are aſhamed of it as a Stranger to their Hearts: do they not call it Inhumanity?

"Serve they not all the ſame univerſal Maſter with thee? Hath he not appointed unto each its Laws? Hath he not Care of their Preſervation? and dareſt thou to infringe it?"

We have no Right to deſpiſe every thing which is placed below us, or to look upon the Eaſe and Sufferings of the inferior Part of the Creation as Matters of Indifference, and as unworthy of our Notice and Concern. (*)

They, who are of another Mind, will not ſurely pretend that they are Imitators of their Heavenly Father's Goodneſs. He thinks them not below his Care: "his Mercies are over all his Works." He, though the King of Kings, condeſcends to be the Feeder of the Raven, and extends his providential Care to the Sparrow.

Theſe are but the minuter Inſtances of his Love, by whoſe ſtupendous Goodneſs all Nature ſubſiſts, and

to

(*) "The merciful Man is merciful to his Beaſt; but the tender Mercies of the Wicked are cruel." Serm. CCVIII.

to which every thing that is, owes its Being and Preſervation. This is but tracing the ſmaller Streams from that Fountain of living Waters.

Yet ought not theſe to go unobſerved, nor be obſerved in vain. "Let us be Followers of God, therefore, as dear Children;" let it appear that ſo winning and inſtructive an Example is not without its proper Force upon us; let us remember and be convinced, that Man was made to feel for others as well as for himſelf, and that every thing which has Senſe hath a Right and Title to Compaſſion. (*)

That a ſympathetick Tenderneſs, and Senſibility of Heart conſtitutes an eſſential Part of a religious Character, there can be no Doubt.

The Excellency of this Affection is demonſtrable, in that it is always found in the beſt Diſpoſitions. If Pride fill the Breaſt with Obſtinacy and Arrogance, we may be aſſured that Pity dwells not there – If Avarice turn the Ear from the complaints of Poverty, we may naturally conclude it to be without Compaſſion. He, whoſe Heart is depraved by the Indulgence of irregular Appetites, or contracted by unſocial Vices, is rarely ſenſible of the Emotions of this Virtue. It is almoſt peculiarly the Growth of the humble and heavenly

(*) Cruelty, (however diſtinguiſhed,) is ſo contrary to Nature, that it is characterized by the odious Name of Inhumanity.

heavenly Mind, that is full of Benevolence, Tenderneſs, and Humanity. If we look into the Lives of thoſe who have been moſt renowned for their Piety, we ſhall find few who have not left behind them ſome extraordinary Inſtances, the Effects of this generous Sympathy.

Such, indeed, is the Excellence of a compaſſionate Temper, that perhaps there never was a good Man, who was not in a great Degree diſtinguiſhed by it.

Its Uſefulneſs to Society cannot be diſputed: if (as we have obſerved,) it be the Source of Charity; if it directs us to the Relief of Miſery, and the Conſolation of Diſtreſs; if it be Feet to the Lame, or Eyes to the Blind; if its Words uphold thoſe that are falling, and if it ſtrengthen the feeble Knees – its Utility is confeſſed; and it is, with indiſputable Propriety, enjoined by the Laws of Religion. Not only are the Words of the Text expreſs to this Purpoſe, but the whole New Teſtament abounds with Paſſages, which enjoin the Cultivation of this Diſpoſition. Being "All of one Body, and Members one of another," we are commanded to love our Neighbour as ourſelf;" – to "look every one not at his own things only, but on thoſe of others alſo;" – to "rejoice with thoſe that do rejoice, and to weep with thoſe that weep." – to "be pitiful, to be courteous" – and, to "bear one ano-

ther's Burdens; and ſo fulfill the Law of Chriſt."

"Be ye, therefore, tender-hearted, and love as Brethren, having Compaſſion one of another, and ſo to fulfil the Law of Chriſt."

The Diſpoſitions oppoſite to Senſibility and Tenderneſs, are, Cruelty, Hardneſs of Heart, contracted Attatchment to worldly Intereſts, which every one will admit, (as they are equally admitted by Scripture,) to be directly oppoſite to the Chriſtian Character. — Indeed,

According to the different Degrees of conſtitutional Warmth in Men's Affections, Senſibility may, even among the Virtuous, prevail in different Proportions. For, all derive not from Nature the ſame happy Delicacy, and Tenderneſs of Feeling. With ſome, the Heart melts, and relents, in kind Emotions, much more eaſily than with others. But, with every One who aſpires to the Character of a good Man, it is neceſſary that the humane, and compaſſionate Diſpoſitions ſhould be found. There muſt be that within him which ſhall form him to feel, in ſome Degree, with the Heart of a Brother; and when he beholds others enjoying Happineſs, or ſees them ſunk in Sorrow, ſhall bring his Affections to accord, and, (if we may ſo ſpeak,) to ſound a Note of Uniſon to theirs.

There is no need, (I preſume,) to ſpend Time in enquiring

enquiring into the Nature of the Duty before us, or to conſider the Occaſions and proper Objects of it.

That Solution of our Saviour to the Queſtion of the ſelf-juſtifying Lawyer is ſufficiently explanatory herein, ſhewing us that no Object whatever, however diſtant, (*) or differing in Intereſt and Opinion from us, ſhould be excluded from our Care and Compaſſion, when Need and Neceſſity preſent him before us, (‡) but that we ſhould readily account an Opportunity to do a kind Office, a ſufficient Call, and the Need of it a ſufficient Claim.

Theſe things being fully evident to us by the natural Light of our own Minds, it may be of leſs Service to ſpeak to them in this View, than to ſee what Arguments

(*) The moſt enlarged and humane Connexion of the private Kind, ſeems to be the hoſpitable Alliance, from which flow the amiable and diſintereſted Duties we owe to Strangers. If the Exerciſe of Paſſions of the moſt private and inſtinctive Kind, is beheld with moral Approbation and Delight, how lovely and venerable muſt thoſe appear, which, reſulting from a calm Philanthropy, are founded in the common Rights and Conections of Society, and embrace Men, not of a particular Sect, Party, or Nation, but All in general, without Diſtinction, and without any of the little Partialities of Self-love.

See Knox's Eſſays, No. 95, On Hoſpitality, and the Civilities of common Life.

(‡) *Hoſpites pauperes nè negligas cum videris,*
Let proper Objects never want a Tear. See Heb. xiii. 2.
Oportet autem Hoſpitem valde ſe accommodare Civitati.
Serm. CCVIII.

ments and Conſiderations can be produced to excite us hereto, and what Advantage may accrue to us from a due and thorough Diſcharge of it. — And here,

The Nature of God, of Ourſelves, and of the Duty before us, plainly require it from us.

That Perfection which the Almighty himſelf ſeems to exalt above all his other Attributes, is the Benignity of his Diſpoſition, the Overflowing of his Beneficence towards us.

Thus he proclaims his Name in the moſt ſolemn and engaging Manner: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth."

God being infinitely full of all poſſible Perfection, whatever we diſcover in his Nature that is communicable to ours That we ought to follow and imitate, as our ſovereign Example, thereby ſhewing ourſelves that we are the Children of God by the Participation of his Nature.

To this Purpoſe it is, that we are commanded to "be merciful, as our Heavenly Father alſo is merciful;" whereby we are to underſtand not merely his Compaſſion and Long-ſuffering, his pardoning and reprieving Sinners; but alſo his unbounded Love, his univerſal and overflowing Goodneſs.

An Imitation of which our bleſſed Lord particularly

larly requires from us; whereby cannot poſſibly be meant any thing leſs, than a tender Feeling for the Wants and Infirmities of others, and a general Benevolence, and every reaſonable Act of Kindneſs, Compaſſion, and Charity, by which we may comfort, relieve, and oblidge one another, in Imitation of him by whoſe Goodneſs all Nature ſubſiſts: he created, and doth ſtill preſerve us; and, when we by Tranſgreſſion fell, redeemed us; and, "*If God ſo loved us, ought not we alſo to love one another?*" and "to have Compaſſion on our Fellow-ſervants, even as he hath had Pity on us."

The Whole of the Argument is this; that every Attribute and Perfection of God requires a Conformity and ſuitable Perfection in us.

By the Goodneſs, the tender Mercy, and Compaſſion of God, therefore, we are not only inſtructed in our Duty, but obliged alſo and called upon to the diligent Diſcharge of the ſame; for, though the Brightneſs of ſuch an Example might itſelf allure us, might "provoke us to Love and to good Works," yet is not This the only Conſideration to be attended to. The Obligation hence ariſing is likewiſe very great; for, ſince we have "freely received, we ſhould therefore freely give."

Nothing can be more reaſonable than that they

ſhould "ſhew Mercy, who themſelves have received, and alſo further hope for Mercy."

How odious, then, in the Sight of God, of ſo gracious and benign a Being, of a God that delights in Mercy and is full of Compaſſion, muſt that Cruelty and Want of Bowels be, which is but too viſible amongſt us. — But further:

Not only from the Nature of God are we taught Compaſſion, but even from our own alſo are we excited hereto, when pure and uncorrupt, and before we are tainted with the ſelfiſh Maxims of this World. (*)

There is ſomething in our Nature which engages us to take-part in every Accident to which Man is ſubject, from what Cauſe ſoever it may have happened; but in ſuch Calamities as a Man has fallen into thro mere Misfortune, to be charged upon no Fault or Indiſcretion of himſelf, there is ſomething then ſo truly intereſting that, at the firſt Sight, we generally make them our own; not altogether from a Reflection that they might have been, or may be ſo; but oftener from a certain Generoſity and Tenderneſs of Nature which diſpoſes us to Compaſſion, abſtracted from all Self-conſiderations: ſo that without any obſervable Act of the Will, we ſuffer with the unfortunate, and feel a Weight upon our Spirits we know not why, on ſeeing the moſt common Inſtances of their Diſtreſs. — But,

(*) See the Note, Page 190. Where

Where the Spectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many Circumſtances of Miſery, the Mind is THEN taken-captive at once, and we are naturally, (I had almoſt ſaid, mechanically,) induced to be helpful to them; and, were it inclined to it, has no Power to make Reſiſtance, but ſurrenders itſelf to all the tender Emotions of Pity and deep Concern. So that when we conſider this friendly Part of our Nature without looking further, we ſhould think it impoſſible for any Man to look upon Miſery without finding himſelf in ſome Meaſure attatched to the Intereſt of him who ſuffers it. We ſhould think it (I ſay,) impoſſible; – for there are ſome Tempers – (how ſhall I deſcribe them!) – formed either of ſuch impenetrable Matter, (*) or wrought up by habitual Selfiſhneſs to ſuch an utter Inſenſibility of what becomes of the Fortunes or Perſons of their Fellow-creatures, as if they were not Partakers of the ſame Nature, nor had any Lot or Connection at all with the Species. (†)

This is not Humanity, nor Nature; but the Corruption of it, which, when pure and free, is naturally given

(*) See the Note, Page 122, 123.

(†) The Butcher relenteth not at the Bleating of the Lamb, neither is the Heart of the Cruel moved with Diſtreſs. Serm. CCVIII.

given "to Love and to good Works." The Apoſtle very ſignificantly expreſſes our purſuing this natural Inclination, by "putting on Bowels of Mercy."

And, as all the Actions of Nature are pleaſant, ſo there is none which gives a good Man a greater or more ſolid and laſting Satisfaction than this of Feeling for our Fellow-creatures; which is an Argument that the Principle from whence this Action proceeds is very deeply rooted in our Nature, and that a due Senſe of thoſe Calamities we ſee others labour under, will not, cannot content itſelf with a bare fruitleſs and formal Compaſſion, with ſaying unto them, "be ye warmed and filled," without giving them wherefore to ſuch Purpoſes; but will exert itſelf in real Acts of Beneficence towards them; for, "out of the abundant natural Goodneſs of their Heart will flow an Abundance to the Relief of their Neceſſities;" (*)

The good Man, unconſtrained by Law, and uncontrouled by human Authority, will chearfully acknowledge, & generouſly ſatisfy every mournful & moving Claim; a Claim ſupported by the Sanction of Heaven, of whoſe Bounties he is honoured to be the grateful Diſtributor; indeed, where Men follow Nature in thoſe tender Motions of it, which incline them to Compaſſion and Kindneſs, they will not, they cannot be eaſy except they lay-hold of the proper Occaſions of

(*) *Re opitulandum, non Verbis.*

of exerting it, agreeable to that divine Pattern of Philanthropy exhibited to us in the Conduct of our bleſſed Saviour, who when he was at any Time moved with Compaſſion, he improved it to an Opportunity of doing ſome great and ſeaſonable Good, even tho he was at the Expence of a Miracle to do it, being himſelf tender-hearted, was extenſive in Goodneſs, according to the Greatneſs of his Compaſſion. (*)

Indeed, this Tenderneſs is ſo agreeable to our Nature, and ſo apt to operate in us in our uncorrupt State, that from all Languages (‡) we have it repreſented to us under the moſt expreſſive Terms; and though there is ſome Difference in the Expreſſions, yet they all ſuppoſe Compaſſion ſo deeply rooted in the human Nature, and ſo eſſential indeed to it, that Men cannot diveſt themſelves of it, or forbear the proper Acts ariſing therefrom, without degenerating even below the common Level of their Beings. — But,

Thirdly, The Nature of the Virtue itſelf is no leſs winning hereto, together with the Advantages which flow from it.

To

(*) We muſt inquire not merely how we feel, but how our Feelings prompt us to act, in Order to aſcertain their real Character.

(‡) From the Greeks we very ſignificantly render *Philanthropy*; from the Latins *Humanity*; and which, in the Language of our own Nation, and with a particular Reſpect to the Genius of it, we expreſs by *Good-nature*.

To be Compaſſionate and Tender-hearted, and feeling for the Neceſſities of others, is a God-like Action, and moſt agreeable to the Dictates of our own uncorrupt Nature, and therefore muſt be truly pleaſing to God, and alſo highly becoming us. Theſe are Arguments forcibly neceſſitating us to all becoming tender Compaſſion.

If things are to be regarded according to their excellent Greatneſs, and if One Virtue differeth from another, as the Virtues themſelves differ in their Degrees, ſo alſo ſhould we regard That which is of greateſt Perfection. God, (we have already ſeen,) eſteems it above all his moral Attributes, and it is agreeable to our Nature. — What therefore is, in theſe high Reſpects, thus recommended to us, we ſhould eſteem accordingly, and conſtantly ſhew forth the Fruits of the ſame in all well-doing, thereby manifeſting ourſelves to be Sons of the Moſt-High, and that we act agreeably to that high Station in which God hath placed us, for the general Good of all Men; for what is more noble than to live by the Example of the Deity? or, what is more becoming us, than to live agreeably to our Natures, in Love and Unity, in Compaſſion and Kindneſs? — But further,

Beſides the Honourableneſs of the Practice of the Virtue before us, its Advantages are many, and great.

We

We hereby ſecure God for our Friend, together with the Love of all Men; and conſequently their Good-will, their Kindneſs and Compaſſion towards us at all Times, together with the pleaſing Reflection of having done our Duty, and acted agreeably to the Nature of things before us.

The Goodneſs of God being That Attribute of his, which he ſo much delights to honour, whereby he deſcribes his Nature to us, and wherein he abounds, it is pious to believe that ſuch Acts of Goodneſs and Compaſſion as we Creatures are capable of performing, are, in the very Reaſon and Nature of them, well pleaſing to him; as they are a faint Tranſcript of that divine Copy which he hath ſet us of his own infinite Goodneſs.

As God condeſcends to take upon him the Character of a Father, and the proper human Paſſions ariſing from that Relation, the more we endeavour to be like him, (if we may argue from the Effects of one of the ſtrongeſt Paſſions in Men,) the more he will like us, and be pleaſed to ſee his Image renewed in us, eſpecially in that Part of it whereby, in the Holy Scriptures, he more particularly diſcovers a Deſire to diſtinguiſh himſelf.

And, therefore, it is a very powerful Argument which our bleſſed Saviour makes uſe of from God's

paternal Relation to us, to excite us to all proper and poſſible Acts of Beneficence and Compaſſion to our Fellow-creatures: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

It is plain, from the Context, and from the Scope of our Saviour's Diſcourſe, that by "being perfect," we are to underſtand the being of a good and merciful Temper: and probably, he purpoſely employed the Word PERFECT, to expreſs ſuch a Temper both in God and Man, thereby to ſhew that the greateſt Perfection of human Nature, and if there be one Perfection greater than another in the Divine, conſiſts in This noble and excellent Diſpoſition; and what God thus highly values, Man, in his uncorrupt Nature, doth eſpecially regard. — Which leads us to another Conſideration of the Advantage of the Duty before us. It is not only Moſt ſuitable to our firſt and beſt Diſpoſition, and to the Nature of God, but likewiſe contributes immediately to our own Felicity. — But,

The Unbenevolent will perhaps eſteem this a Paradox, to talk of growing Rich by giving away what he has already got: He will probably be for the very contrary Method, and will rather think it the beſt Policy to increaſe his preſent Poſſeſſions by adding every poſſible Gain to them, and preventing every unneceſſary Diſburſement of any Part of them. But, if he be

be not too wise to hearken to Authority or Reason, let him attend a little to the Testimonies and Observations, which we shall produce in the next,

Sermon

SERMON CCIX.

On the ſame Subject, Advantages of it.

Ephe. iv. 32. —— "Tender-hearted."

Charity, we have already ſeen, is not only moſt agreeable to our FIRST and BEST Diſpoſition, and to the Nature of God; but likewiſe contributes immediately to our own Felicity. This is the Point we are now to purſue. — But here,

The Unbenevolent will, perhaps, eſteem this a Paradox, to talk of growing Rich by giving-away: – but the Wiſeſt of Men has advanced this ſeeming Paradox, in theſe very Words, and with a View to This very Argument – "There is that ſcattereth and yet increaſeth, and there is that with-holdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to Poverty;" and then goes on in the next Verſe, "the Liberal Soul ſhall be made fat, and he that watereth, ſhall be watered alſo himſelf." – And, – The Reaſon of this is equally clear from other Paſſages of Scripture: for, it is morally impoſſible

impoſſible that any ſhould thrive or proſper without the Good-will either of God or Man. And yet, nothing can more alienate both, than an unbenevolent Spirit and Conduct, nor any thing more recommend and entitle us to the Eſteem and Aſſiſtance of our Creator and our Fellow-creatures, than an extenſive and univerſal Exerciſe of Charity in all its Branches.

For, thinkeſt thou this, O Man, that thou who regardeſt another, that thou thyſelf ſhalt be diſregarded? God forbid. "God will not forget our Labour of Love, which we have ſhewed to the Brethren for his great Names Sake," but will count it as done to himſelf, and will reward us accordingly.

Let us hear the Divine Spirit ſpeaking in his own Divine Words even under the Jewiſh-Law. "Thou ſhalt ſurely give to thy poor Brother, and thine Heart ſhall not be grieved when thou giveſt unto him, becauſe that for This thing the Lord thy God ſhall bleſs thee in all thy Works, and in all thou putteſt thine Hand unto." This was not a national, but a perſonal Bleſſing; and the ſame is repeated in ſeveral other Paſſages.

The peculiar Bleſſing of God in preſerving the Charitable from falling into Calamities themſelves, or in ſupporting them under their Diſtreſſes, is thus repreſented by the Pſalmiſt. "Bleſſed is he that conſidereth

ſidereth the Poor, the Lord will deliver him in the Time of Trouble, — The Lord will preſerve and keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the Earth, and thou wilt not deliver him into the Will of his Enemies. The Lord ſhall ſtrengthen him upon his Bed of Languiſhing: thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickneſs."

The Wiſe Man recommends the ſame Practice upon the ſame Motive. "If thine Enemy hunger, give him Bread to eat, and if he be thirſty, give him Water to drink; for ſo thou ſhalt heap Coals of Fire upon his Head, and the Lord ſhall reward thee." To the ſame Purpoſe elſewhere, "He that giveth to the Poor ſhall not lack, but he that hideth his Eyes ſhall have many a Curſe:" which in another Place again he expreſſeth in this Manner; "Whoſo ſtoppeth his Ears at the Cry of the Poor, he alſo ſhall cry himſelf, and ſhall not be heard."

But principally is that Saying of the ſame Wiſe Author to be remembered, which contains in one ſingle Sentence more Rhetorick than can be expreſſed — "He that hath Pity on the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and That which he hath given, will he pay him again."

Holy Job expreſſes even his Imprecation ſo, as to ſhew that it was not a wild and ſudden Flight of Fury

or

or Fancy, but a ſober and ſerious Apprehenſion of the divine Inſpection, a Regard to his known Protection and Bleſſing on the Exerciſe of Charity, and his as certain Vengeance on the Neglect of it. "If, (ſays he,) I have with-held the Poor from their Deſire, and have cauſed the Eyes of the Widows to fail; or have eaten my Morſel alone, and the Fatherleſs have not eaten thereof; — If I have ſeen any periſh for Want of Cloathing, or any Poor without Covering; if his Loins have not bleſſed me, if he were not warmed with the Fleece of my Sheep; If I have lifted up my Hand againſt the Fatherleſs, when I ſaw my Help in the Gate, then let my Arm fall from the Shoulder-blade, and mine Arm be broken from the Bone; for the Deſtruction from God was a Terror to me, and by Reaſon of his Highneſs I could not endure."

The Prophet Iſaiah, in the uſual Magnificence of his affecting Stile, deſcribes the temporal Bleſſings ſhowered down by Providence on Works of Mercy. "Is not This the Faſt that I have choſen? to loſe the Bands of Wickedneſs, to undo the heavy Burdens, and to let the Oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every Yoke? — Is it not to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and that thou bring the Poor that are caſt out, to thy Houſe? when thou ſeeſt the Naked, that thou cover him, & that thou hide not thyſelf from

thine own Fleſh? Then ſhall thy Light break forth as the Morning, & thine Health ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily: and thy Righteouſneſs ſhall go before thee; the Glory of the Lord ſhall be thy Rere-ward. – Then ſhalt thou call, and the Lord ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt cry, and He ſhall ſay, here I am; if thou take away from the midſt of thee the Yoke, the putting-forth of the Finger, and the ſpeaking Vanity; and if thou draw out thy Soul to the Hungry, and ſatisfy the afflicted Soul, then ſhall thy Light riſe in Obſcurity, and thy Darkneſs be as the Noon-day. – And the Lord ſhall guide thee continually, and ſatisfy thy Soul in Drought, and make fat thy Bones; and thou ſhalt be like a watered Garden, and like a Spring of Water, whoſe Waters fail not."

This is the ſtrongeſt and moſt frequent Emblem of Plenty, and, (if the Promiſes of God are ſure,) the certain Conſequences of the Exerciſe of Charity.

The Prophet Daniel recommends this Method to King Nebuchadnezzer, as the beſt for averting Vengeance and perpetuating his preſent Peace and Proſperity.

"Wherefore, O King, let my Counſel be acceptable unto thee, and break-off thy Sins by Righteouſneſs, and thine Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor, if it may be a Lengthening of thy Tranquility."

The

The Scriptures of the New Teſtament apply the ſame Promiſes to Chriſtians. "Bleſſed, (ſays our Lord himſelf,) are the Merciful, for they ſhall obtain Mercy." In another Part of the ſame divine Sermon on the Mount, (as repreſented by St. Luke,) he directs and promiſes thus, "Love ye your Enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again," (i.e) from them, "and your Reward ſhall be great, and ye ſhall be Children of the Higheſt."

An Example of the Efficacy of Charity to this Purpoſe, we have in the Hiſtory of Cornelius, where this is expreſsly mentioned as his Recommendation to the Divine Favour. "Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God."

St. Paul repeats the ſame Doctrine, as in other Places, ſo particularly in his Epiſtle to the Hebrews. "God is not unrighteous to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have ſhewed towards his Name, in that ye have miniſtred towards the Saints, and yet do miniſter." And again in the ſame Epiſtle, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with ſuch Sacrifices God is well-pleaſed."

If then the Favour and Bleſſing of God be any Help towards our Succeſs in the World, – if Men really put any Truſt in the Scriptures, which they pretend to believe and reverence, This is one plain Rea-

ſon of the Proſperity of the Charitable Perſon, and a ſtrong Enforcement of a Charitable Practice even in an intereſted View.

The proper Inference, therefore, is That which St. Paul offers. "Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in Good-works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in Store for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life." — But,

Becauſe we are more ſenſible of what we SEE, than of inviſible Influences, becauſe the Argument ſtrikes ſtronger on us, which is deduced from EXPERIMENTAL Intercourſe with our Fellow-creatures, than from a CONTEMPLATED Relation to, and Dependence on our Creator, tho the former are in Reality, no other than the Inſtruments of Providence; yet on this Account, the Good-will of Mankind, which is raiſed by this Virtue, may be conſidered as an obvious Ground of Succeſs, and Means to promote it.

A Charitable Perſon has every One's good Word and Wiſhes; his Preferment is a publick Benefit, as many will reap the Advantage of his ſuperior Station. He will have no Impediments laid deſignedly in the

Way

Way to his Advancement, and he will have the hearty Endeavours of many to promote it, who will, either by themſelves or their Friends, receive again the benevolent Uſe and Exerciſe of it.

St. Paul repreſents this Efficacy of Charity to ſecure the Good-will & Services of Mankind in the ſtrongeſt Inſtance which can poſſibly be aſſigned. "Scarcely, (ſays he,) for a Righteous Man," (i.e) for One who hardly does no Wrong, "will One die; yet peradventure, for a Good Man," (i.e) for One who is himſelf a generous Benefactor to Mankind, "ſome would even dare to die." The Gratitude of Mankind might poſſibly carry them ſo far as this, for a Perſon who had endeared himſelf to them by diſintereſted Services for them. At leaſt, we ſhall have Treaſures heaped up in Abundance for us, againſt the Time of our Need, in Return for the Compaſſion & Relief we have ſhewn to them in their Neceſſities; "preſſed down & ſhaken together, heaped up and running over, ſhall Men give into our Boſoms for theſe things towards them;" (*) and in the mean Time we ſhall have the Compoſure and pleaſing Reflection of having done our Duty, and acted conſiſtent to our Station; and conſequently that we have ſecured the Good-will both of God and Man towards us; and therefore, that no Evil can happen unto us. This

(*) To do Good, is the Way to find it. Serm. CCIX.

This Argument of the Aſſiſtance and ready Services of our Fellow-creatures for us, is of peculiar Force to us, who ſo often need their actual Aſſiſtance, and at our beſt Eſtate are always liable to want it.

With this View, the Wiſe Man enforceth the Exerciſe of Charity. "Caſt thy Bread upon the Waters, and thou ſhalt find it again after many Days." "Give a Portion to SEVEN, and alſo to EIGHT; for thou knoweſt not what ſhall be upon the Earth." And the wiſe Son of Sirach, "fail not to be with them that weep, and to mourn with them that mourn. Be not ſlow to viſit the Sick, for that ſhall make thee to be beloved."

The Apoſtle urges the ſame Conſideration more clearly and emphatically: "Remember them that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them which are in Adverſity, as being yourſelves alſo in the Body."

The Indigence of our Nature, and the Caſualties it is expoſed to, ſtrengthen by Reflection our natural Tendency to Compaſſion, and ſuggeſt an additional Motive to the Exerciſe of that Charity which it is more than poſſible that every Man may, in ſome Reſpect, live to want from others.

Thus the Wants, as well as the Privileges of Humanity concur to teach the ſame Leſſon, and both our Senſes and our Reaſon admoniſh us to improve and exert that general Benevolence, which is a Glory

to

to every one to give, and may be any One's Lot to receive.

Nor need we be ashamed to urge even this INTERESTED Motive to the Practice of it, since all Motives are wanting to promote it; — The VARIOUS Arguments work on different Tempers, and ALL UNITED must have superior Force; and even they who act upon the best and most generous Principles, need not be ashamed to observe and consider, that their Duty, in this Respect, brings its own Reward.

Add to This the powerful Influence it has to the proper Discharge of all the relative and social Duties of Life; which are performed by Men from different Principles, and in different Ways.

Sometimes they are performed merely from Decency and a Regard to Character; sometimes from Fear, and even from Selfishness, which oblidges Men to shew Kindness, in Order that they may receive Returns of it.

In such Cases, the Exterior of fair Behaviour may be preserved. But All will admit, that when from Constraint only, the Offices of seeming Kindness are performed, little Dependance can be placed on them, and little Value allowed to them.(*)

By Others, these Offices are discharged, solely from a Principle of Duty. They are Men of cold Affec-

(*) The Affectation of Sensibility though it is very common is very odious; it renders a Man insensible, and a Woman ridiculous, instead of relieving the afflicted, (which is the necessary Effect of genuine Sympathy,) a Character of this Sort flies from Misery, to shew that it is too delicate to support the Sight of Distress; it pretends to [illegible]

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superior Refinement and Philanthropy, but it is remarkable that this Delicacy often disappears in Solitude, and the Pretender to uncommon Sensibility who would almost faint at the jolting of a Carriage, or the Appearance of any thing disagreeable, is frequently found in the Absence of Witnesses to be very unfeeling.

tions, and perhaps of a ſelfiſh & intereſted Character.

But, over-awed by a Senſe of Religion, and convinced that they are bound to be beneficent, they fulfil the Courſe of relative Duties with regular Tenor. Such Men act from Conſcience and Principle. – So far they do well, and are worthy of Praiſe. – They aſſiſt their Friends – they give to the Poor, – they do Juſtice to all. — But,

What a different Complexion is given to the SAME Actions, when they flow from the Senſibility of a feeling Heart? – If One be not moved by Affection, even ſuppoſing him influenced by Principle, he will go no further than ſtrict Principle appears to require. He will advance ſlowly and reluctantly. – As it is Juſtice, not Generoſity, which impels him, he will often feel as a Taſk what he is required by Conſcience to perform. Whereas, to him who is prompted by virtuous Senſibility, every Office of Beneficence and Humanity is a Pleaſure. – He gives, aſſiſts, and relieves, not merely becauſe he is bound ſo to do, but becauſe it would be painful for him to refrain. – Hence the ſmalleſt Benefit he confers riſes in its Value, on Account of its carrying the Affection of the Giver impreſſed upon the Gift. – It ſpeaks his Heart – and the Diſcovery of the Heart is very frequently of greater Conſequence than all that Liberality can beſtow.

flow. – How often will the affectionate Smile of Approbation gladden the humble, and raiſe the dejected? How often will the Look of tender Sympathy, or the Tear that involuntarily falls, impart Conſolation to the unhappy? – By Means of this Correſpondence of Hearts, all the great Duties which we owe to one another are both performed, to more Advantage, and endeared in the Performance. – From true Senſibility flow a thouſand good Offices, apparently ſmall in themſelves, but of high Importance to the Felicity of others; Offices which altogether eſcape the Obſervation of the cold and unfeeling, who by the Hardneſs of their Manner, render themſelves unamiable, even when they mean to do good.

How happy, then, would it be for Mankind, if this affectionate Diſpoſition prevailed more generally in the World? – How much would the Sum of publick Virtue, and publick Felicity be increaſed if Men were always inclined to this compaſſionate Temper, and tender Fellow-feeling for one another! — But,

Beſides the Effect of ſuch a Temper on the general Virtue and Happineſs, let us conſider its Effect on the Happineſs of him who poſſeſſes it, and the various Pleaſures to which it gives him Acceſs.

If he be Maſter of Riches and Affluence, it affords him the Means of increaſing his own Enjoyment, by

relieving the Wants, and increaſing the Comforts of others. – If he commands not theſe Advantages, yet all the Comforts which he ſees in the Poſſeſſion of the Deſerving become in ſome Sort his, by his rejoicing in the Good which they enjoy. – Even the Face of Nature yields a Satisfaction to him, which the Inſenſible can never enjoy. – The Profuſion of Goodneſs which he beholds poured forth on the Univerſe dilates his Heart with the Thought that innumerable Multitudes around him are bleſſed and happy; – When he ſees the Labours of Men appearing to proſper, and views a Country floriſhing in Wealth and Induſtry; when he beholds the Spring coming forth in its Beauty, and reviving the decayed Face of Nature; or in Autumn beholds the Fields loaded with Plenty, and the Year crowned with all its Fruits; he lifts his Affections with Gratitude to the Great Father of all, and rejoices in the general Joy and Felicity.

It may, indeed, be objected, that the ſame Senſibility lays open the Heart to be pierced with many Wounds from the Diſtreſſes which abound in the World; expoſes us to frequent Suffering from the Participation which it communicates of the Sorrows, as well as the Joys of others. But,

Let it be conſidered, that the tender Melancholy of Sympathy is accompanied with a Senſation, which they who

who feel it, would not exchange for all the Gratifications of the Selfiſh and Obdurate. – When the Heart is ſtrongly moved by any of the kind Affections, even when it pours itſelf forth in virtuous Sorrow, a ſecret attractive Charm mingles with the painful Emotion; there is a Joy in the midſt of Grief. – Let it be further remembered that the Griefs which Senſibility introduces are counterbalanced by Pleaſures which flow from the ſame Source. – Senſibility heightens, in general, the human Powers, and is connected with Acuteneſs in all our Feelings. – If it makes us alive to ſome painful Senſations; in Return, it renders the pleaſing Ones more vivid and ſtrong.

The ſelfiſh and obdurate Man languiſhes in his narrow Circle of Pleaſures. – They are confined to what affects his own Intereſts, and he is, therefore, obliged to repeat the ſame Gratifications, till they become inſipid. – But, the Man of virtuous Senſibility moves in a wider Sphere of Felicity. – His Powers are much more frequently called-forth into Occaſions of pleaſing Activity. – Numberleſs Opportunities open to him of indulging his favourite Taſte, by conveying Satisfaction to others. – Often it is in his Power, in one Way or other, to ſooth the afflicted Heart, and to carry ſome Conſolation into the Houſe of Woe. – In the Scenes of ordinary Life, in the domeſtick and ſo-

cial Intercourſe of Men, the Cordiality of his Affections chears and gladdens him. Every Appearance, every Deſcription of innocent Happineſs, is enjoyed by him. Every native Expreſſion of Kindneſs and Affection among others is felt by him, even tho he be not the Object of it. Among a Circle of Friends, enjoying one another, he is as happy as the happieſt.

In a Word, — He lives in a different Sort of World from what the ſelfiſh Man inhabits. He poſſeſſes a new Senſe which enables him to behold Objects which the Selfiſh cannot ſee. At the ſame Time, his Enjoyments are not of That Kind which remain merely on the Surface of the Mind. They penetrate the Heart. They enlarge and elevate, they refine and enoble it. To all the pleaſing Emotions of Affection, they add the dignified Conſciouſneſs of Virtue.

Children of Men! Men formed by Nature, to live and feel as Brethren! How long will ye continue to eſtrange yourſelves from One another by Competitions and Jealouſies, when in cordial Union ye might be ſo much more bleſt? How long will ye ſeek your Happineſs in ſelfiſh Gratifications alone, neglecting thoſe purer and better Sources of Joy, which flow from the Affections and the Heart?

What Charge, then, will lie on the Neglect of a Virtue which comes enforced by Conſiderations of ſo

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clear and preſſing an Influence, as thoſe of Inſtinct & Intereſt, which our natural Diſpoſition firſt inclines us to, and our daily Wants continually remind us of? If Men can be regardleſs of the Bleſſing of God, and of the Good-will of Men, when they can attain both by a Practice, in which there is likewiſe a conſtitutional Delight, it may ſeem difficult to add any thing of greater Weight, which may influence them to a better and more benevolent Conduct. — Yet, we muſt not omit to add, that

Perſonal Motives ceaſe not even here. Tho our Welfare in this World be well-worth our Attention, it is yet of inferior Conſequence, when compared to That which is to ſucceed it.

Our FUTURE Happineſs depends much on this Temper and Conduct. It is by poſitive Precept the expreſs Condition of it; and it is, in the Nature of the thing, the neceſſary Qualification for it.

The Texts already recited, relate to temporal Promiſes, and the Bleſſing of God on our worldly Concerns; which, whilſt we continue in this World, are not to be diſregarded: but thoſe, which relate to the Security of our future Welfare, are more important, and not leſs clear.

To give One Proof for all: — Our Bleſſed Lord himſelf in the Repreſentation of the future Judgment,

puts the Inquiry, and the Sentence at the Great Day, chiefly upon This Point, when he declares that He will accept, as done to himſelf, the Mercies which charitable Perſons have ſhewn to their diſtreſſed Brethren. "Inaſmuch as ye have done it to the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have done it unto me; enter ye into the Joy of your God."

If Faith and Hope, then, extend our View, and direct our Thoughts to the other World; yet, it is Charity only which can make our View comfortable, & enable us to look forward with Satisfaction & Security. Our Faith will ſelf-condemn us, and our Hope deceive us, if we do not regulate our Hearts & Lives by the benevolent Dictates of the Goſpel. It is the Aim of Both thoſe Duties and Privileges to amend our Morals; and if our Practice is bad, our beſt Speculations are vain and fruitleſs.

The Joys of the Other World are never promiſed to bare Aſſent, or bold Confidence; but to a faithful ſocial Conduct. They are never indeed promiſed to a ſingle Virtue, excluſive of the reſt; but This is that particular Virtue by which the Scripture expreſſes the Whole Sum of Morality, as including and implying all others. This is not only the FIRST good Work which Humanity inclines us to, but the LAST, which adorns our Improvement in Evangelical Duties. "If thou

thou wilt be PERFECT," (ſaid our Saviour to the Young Man, who boaſted of great Proficiency in Morality,) "go and ſell that thou haſt, and give to the Poor, and come and follow me." (*) And,

Tho the Method and Extent of the Charity of Chriſt's Diſciples at that Time was occaſional, yet the Obligation and Notion of it were univerſal and perpetual. The Promiſe of Heaven is peculiarly appropriated

(*) It is obſervable, in many Places of Scripture, that our Bleſſed Lord, in deſcribing the Day of Judgment, does it in ſuch a Manner, as if the great Inquiry then was to relate principally to this One Virtue of Compaſſion; — as if our final Sentence at That Solemnity was to be pronounced exactly according to the Degrees of it.

"*I was an hungered*, and *ye gave me no Meat*; — *Thirſty*, and *ye gave me no Drink*; — *Naked*, and *ye clothed me not*; — *Sick and in Priſon*, and *ye miniſtered not unto me.*"

Not that we are to imagine from thence, as if any other good or evil Action would then be overlooked by the Eye of the all-ſeeing Judge; but barely to intimate to us, that a Charitable, Benevolent, and Compaſſionate Diſpoſition is ſo principal and ruling a Part of a Man's Character, as to be a conſiderable Teſt by itſelf of the whole Frame and Temper of his Mind, with which all other Virtues reſpectively riſe or fall, and will almoſt neceſſarily be connected.

So that when we ſay a Man is *Compaſſionate*, we repreſent him as poſſeſſed of a thouſand other good Qualities.

Well therefore might the Apoſtle conclude that "Charity," (by which he means the Love of our Neighbour,) "was the End of the Commandment;" and, that "whoſoever fulfilled it, had fulfilled the Law." — Upon all theſe Accounts it is, that ſo many Bleſſings are promiſed to it in the Goſpel.

propriated to it, becauſe it is the Temper of That Place, the Condition and Qualification for that bleſſed Society. Our Benevolence will THEN admit the utmoſt Exerciſe, and receive its utmoſt Gratification, not indeed in relieving Diſtreſs and Miſery, but in promoting and improving each other's Felicity, which will reciprocally be our Office and our Reward.

If This Conſideration does not influence us, ſure we deceive ourſelves, as well as others, in pretending to the Chriſtian Belief. Our Faith and Hope muſt be hypocritical and fallacious, if they do not ſometimes force our Affections to the important Scenes of Futurity; or if they do not upon that Attention apply and fix our ardent Deſires of Happineſs to thoſe Scenes, and extort ſome Reſolutions and ſuitable Endeavours in the pleaſurable and profitable Path of Charity.

In this Light, and with this View, we ſhall find Self-love & ſocial to be truly the ſame, & that we are promoting our beſt Intereſt in the Regard which we ſhew to the Intereſts of others. What we give to them, we do not give from ourſelves; indeed, theſe are the only Part of our preſent Treaſures, which we ſhall not leave behind us. (*) Theſe will, to our Comfort and Advantage, go with us into the other World, and be there our beſt Ornament and Wealth. Thus

(*) *Extrà Fortunam eſt quicquid donatur Amicis,*
Quæ dederis ſolas ſemper habebis Opes.

Thus may we, (as our Saviour ſpeaks and adviſes) "of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs," (i.e) of the deceitful and tranſitory Riches of this World, by a proper and benevolent Uſe of them, "make to ourſelves Friends," no leſs than God and his Angels, "who when we fail," when we die and periſh from off this Earth, "may receive us into everlaſting Habitations."

This is the glorious Exchange, the happy Privilege which we may make of a good Uſe of the preſent Opportunities of doing Good.

Neither ought we to omit the Apoſtle's Argument of the Proportion of Reward to the Extent of our Charity – "He which ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly; and he, which ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap alſo bountifully." — The higheſt Degree of Happineſs will be their Lot, who moſt ſtudie to promote the Happineſs of others.

For our own Sakes, therefore, let us exclude thoſe ſelfiſh Diſpoſitions, (as they are called,) which in Truth are prejudicial to ourſelves, which deſtroy the moſt generous and noble Delight of this Life, and above all, are Enemies to our Proſpect in the next. There this Virtue will continue to be a Pleaſure in itſelf, and a Title to further Joys; – for, the Delights of Eternity are propoſed not to thoſe, who are moſt CREDULOUS in their Belief, or moſt ſanguine in their Expectations,

but who are moſt fervent in Charity and Beneficence.

Thus is this Virtue enforced by many perſonal Conſiderations, by the very Infirmities and by the Privileges of our Conſtitution, by the Wants we are ſubject to ourſelves at preſent, and by the glorious Proſpect we enjoy of being above Want hereafter. It is a prudent Proviſion againſt the Caſualties we are liable to, & it is the higheſt Entertainment of the moſt plentiful and eaſy Situation. It is inculcated by Inſtinct, approved by Reaſon, and required by Revelation; It comes peculiarly recommended to us both as Men and as Chriſtians; for it is ſuitable to the beſt Diſpoſition of our Nature, and to the moſt glorious Promiſes of our Faith.

Sermon

SERMON CCX.

On the ſame Subject.

Motives to it.

Ephe. iv. 32. —— "Tender-hearted."

We have already conſidered, under theſe Words, the many and ſtrong Obligations we are under to the Practice of the Virtue before us; But, as we are not born for Ourſelves alone; other Conſiderations are to be admitted in this Argument.

As Charity is a Duty owing BY us, ſo it is a Duty owing TO our Fellow-creatures. A Regard to them muſt be inculcated, and will itſelf inculcate this Virtue, which aims at a greater and more extenſive Good, the Happineſs of the WHOLE Creation. Our Neighbours, therefore, have a juſt Right to be conſidered in the Enforcement of this Duty, and a ſolid Claim to the Exerciſe of our Benevolence.

The Objects of our Charity are our Brethren of the Human Species, who have the ſame Benevolence towards us to entitle them to it, the ſame Wants that

we have to require it, and the ſame important Hopes and Privileges to render them worthy of it. — And,

First, They have the ſame Principle of Benevolence towards us to entitle them to ours; we are not called on to love hateful Objects, but to "be kindly affectioned one towards another with Brotherly-love." Our Charity is not thrown away on thoſe who are inſenſible of Obligation, and incapable of Amendment, but is to be exerciſed to them who have the ſame original Sentiment of Humanity and Compaſſion, and who, by experiencing the Benefit of Charity, will learn to exerciſe it in their Turn and Sphere. (*) The Duty is reciprocal and general, and deſigned for univerſal Advantage.

The Prophet Iſaiah gives us an affecting Idea of this, inculcating the Exerciſe of Charity by this Expreſſion, that we ſhould "not hide ourſelves from our own Fleſh." — And St. Paul, That "God hath made of One Fleſh all Nations of Men to dwell on all the Face of the Earth." — And therefore, If

(*) Every Man is preſumed, (for he is naturally diſpoſed,) to bear this Character, and to have this Recommendation to our Good-will and Aſſiſtance. If he has not worked out by repeated Acts of Wickedneſs this innate Principle of Compaſſion, and by poſitive Acts of Cruelty, or Neglect of Diſtreſs, given Proof of a contrary Diſpoſition, we ought to ſuppoſe, that every Man whom we relieve and aſſiſt, would do the ſame for us, if his Abilities permitted, and our Neceſſities required it.

If we feel a natural Inclination to compaſſionate and aſſiſt the Diſtreſſes of Others, we know by that Feeling that they bear the like natural Inclination to us; which ought to be an Encouragement and Satisfaction to us, to exert ourſelves for our Brethren and Well-wiſhers. — But again,

As they have the ſame Benevolence towards us, to entitle them to our Regard and Aſſiſtance; ſo they have the ſame Wants and Neceſſities, to require it.

We know by Experience, how painful are many Diſeaſes to the Body, how afflictive are many Misfortunes to the Mind, and how ruinous many Caſualties are to the outward Eſtate; and therefore, from Ourſelves, we know What they feel, who ſuffer under the like Diſtreſſes.

If then we have an Averſion to Miſery ourſelves we ought to endeavour to prevent and relieve it in others; for, they have the ſame Senſations and Reflections on the Occaſions with us.

We ought, therefore, (as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it,) to "bear one another's Burdens," to leſſen the common Weight and Load of Affliction caſt upon Mankind, and to relieve thoſe Calamities of which we partake. For, we have no Privilege to be above "being touched with the Feeling of their Infirmities, but are in all Points," liable to the ſame Diſtreſſes as they are,

Sin itſelf not excepted; and therefore, if, in the ſame Situation, we ſhould hope for Mercy from them, we are deeply bound by the great Rule of Equity to extend Mercy to them, and to miniſter liberally to their ſeveral Neceſſities.

"Who then is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" ſhould be the Language & Conduct of every Partaker of Human Nature; we ſhould ſympathiſe in the Sufferings and Afflictions of our Brethren, and ſo ſympathiſe, as to aim at removing from others what we ſhould be unwilling and unable to bear ourſelves.

I will only add the Advice of the Wiſe Son of Sirach, which is grounded throughout on the Diſtreſs of thoſe whom he calls on us to relieve.

"My Son, defraud not the Poor of his Living, and make not the needy Eyes to wait long. Make not an hungry Soul ſorrowful; neither provoke a Man in his Diſtreſs. Add not more Trouble to a Heart that is vexed, and defer not to give to him that is in Need. Reject not the Supplication of the Afflicted, neither turn away thy Face from a poor Man. Turn not away thine Eye from the Needy, and give him none Occaſion to curſe thee." — But,

Further yet, They have not only the ſame Benevolence and the ſame Wants with ourſelves, but are jointly

jointly interested with us in the same important Promises and Privileges. They are not only Brethren by Nature, but by Grace, and are Partakers of the same Holy Faith and important Hopes. "By One Spirit, are we All baptized into One Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be Bond or Free, and have all been made to drink into One Spirit."

In the very highest Privilege that our Nature is capable of, we are all equal; and are only differenced by those things on which our main Interest does not depend, and which will be of short Duration; our Brother, of the lowest Degree, is born to the same great Prospect as the Highest amongst us; and though his Passage towards Eternity may be beset with more Difficulties, yet the Road is as safe, and the Conclusion equally happy and honourable; for "God is no Respecter of Persons." The only Difference that will then take-place, will be according to our Difference in Degrees of Goodness here: so that he who is Least in this World, may be the Greatest in Heaven; and the Greatest here, the Least there: "for as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, so also shall we at the Resurrection," according to the Degrees of our Perfection here.

Should we not, then, delight to assist each other in this our transitory Passage, when we hope to meet in

the End, and enjoy their Society in unmixed and eternal Felicity. — In this Light the Apoſtle urgeth his Argument: "as we have Opportunity, let us do good unto all Men, but eſpecially unto them that are of the Houſe-hold of Faith."

The meaneſt Chriſtian bears a fœderal Relation to our Saviour, & is Heir of an eternal Inheritance: & are not ſuch great Pretenſions, in which we ourſelves are ſo deeply intereſted, an earneſt Claim to our preſent Regard and Aſſiſtance? Can we refuſe the little Supplies of this Life to thoſe, who at the End of it have as good Expectations as ourſelves? St. James thought This a Point which deſerved Attention, and would excite Benevolence. "Hath not God choſen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which God hath promiſed to them that love him?"

The Blood of our Redeemer was ſhed for every Partaker of Human Nature: and, if "for This Cauſe (as Head of the Myſtical Body, the Church) "He is not aſhamed to call them Brethren," ſurely we ought to be aſhamed not to conſider and treat them as ſuch.

This is a Relation moſt honourable in its Kind, and the moſt near in Degree; and every Man who conſiders himſelf as a Paſſenger towards Heaven, yet as owing his Title to it to the Merits of Chriſt, ſhould conſider

conſider Others, as Fellow-travellers, purſuing the ſame End, and honoured with the ſame FREE-GIFT of Claim.

Where the true Faith is made known, embraced, & obeyed, each One is Heir of a glorious Immortality, and the Importance of their FUTURE Proſpect gives Dignity to their PRESENT Condition. They have been valued by Him, who beſt knows their Value, as having created and redeemed them, at the ſame Rate with ourſelves, and being joined in the ſame Intereſt, directed by the ſame Laws, and entitled to the ſame Hopes, have therefore every Claim to our Eſteem and Aſſiſtance: For, "if God ſo loved us all, certainly we ought alſo to love one another." — But further,

We muſt raiſe our Thoughts from the Creature to the Creator, and in the meaneſt Partaker of human Nature conſider the Divine "Image and Superſcription that he bears."

Thus Job recommends the loweſt Object to our Eſteem and Regard "Did not He, (ſays he,) that made me, make him, and did not One faſhion us in the Woomb?" – However contemptible therefore the Perſon may be that needs our Charity, yet the Author of his Being deſerves ſurely our Regard; and not only deſerves, but requires it in This Inſtance.

The Imitation of the Divine Being in this Caſe is

our Privilege; — the Recommendation of Religion hereby is our beſt Service; and the Return of Benefits our indiſpenſible Duty.

It is one Point wherein the Poverty of our Nature and Station allows us the Privilege of imitating our great and gracious Creator. — Our Probation and Preparation for our own Happineſs are Points, which have no Relation to the Self-ſufficiency of the Supreme Being, but our contributing to the Happineſs of others bears a low Similitude to him "who is good to all, and whoſe tender Mercies are over all his Works."

Again, — As this Reſemblance of the Divine Pattern is our higheſt Glory, ſo it is the beſt Service that we can do to the Cauſe of God and Goodneſs.

In a ſtrict Senſe we "cannot be profitable to God;" but in publiſhing his Praiſe and promoting his Will, we yield the only and the utmoſt Tribute that we are capable of. — And, there is no Virtue which ſo immediately ſets-forth the Glory of God and the Benefit of Religion, as This of Charity and Good-will to Mankind. We hereby ſhew Religion to be worthy of a Divine Author, as being calculated, as well for the preſent, as our future Welfare.

Laſtly, As Charity is our higheſt Privilege and beſt Service, ſo is it our indiſpenſible Duty with Reſpect to our Maker. It

It is the Expreſſion of our Gratitude, the Diſcharge of our Truſt, and the Completion of a clear and poſitive Precept. — And,

Firſt, It is the Expreſſion of our Gratitude. — To the Charity of our Maker towards us, we owe the Poſſibility of exerciſing our own. Some Acknowledgement therefore in Part, in Teſtimony of our Dependence upon him for the Whole, is the firſt Thought which Reaſon would ſuggeſt, If we affect not to be thought ſelf-ſufficient, and to owe our Endowments and Poſſeſſions to our own Wiſdom and Power, ſome Tribute of Return to the bounteous Author of all the good things we enjoy muſt in itſelf be fit and proper. "All things, (ſaith David,) come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given thee." The Gifts of Nature, and the Works of Providence demand this Acknowledgment; but when we look to the Evidence of Faith, and the Encouragement of our Hope, the Argument of Gratitude will be more ſtrong and affecting. The Importance of ſpiritual and eternal Mercies ſhould make us rejoice in the Opportunity, which temporal and tranſitory good things yield us of expreſſing our Praiſe and Thankfulneſs. — Again,

Charity is not only an Expreſſion of our Gratitude; but the Diſcharge of a Truſt committed to us by our Maker.

The very Deſign of the unequal Diſtribution of good things in this World, of the Want of ſome, and the Plenty of others, was to exerciſe and improve this Temper of Mind, and to promote a Circulation of good Offices among Men; – Their Wants are a Call on, and Teſt of our Virtue, and their Neceſſities were calculated to correſpond to our Superfluities, on Purpoſe to cement and ſupport Society.

As our Bleſſings were not originally our own, but given to us; ſo neither are they now ſo much our own as to be diſpoſed of in any Method at our Pleaſure. They are the Gifts of a Maſter, to whom we muſt account for the Uſe of them. "As every Man, therefore, hath received the Gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God." — But,

Laſtly, Charity is not only the Expreſſion of our Gratitude, and the Diſcharge of our Truſt, but the Completion of a clear and poſitive Precept.

As diſtinctly as its Obligation may be thought to be felt, and reaſoned out by us, yet Providence did not think fit to leave it to the Force of the plaineſt Inferences and Deductions, but has enjoined it in the ſtrongeſt and moſt expreſs Terms. The Whole preceeding Diſcourſe has yielded many Proofs of This, and St. John by an emphatical Interrogation repreſents

ſents the Neglect of it as an undoubted Evidence of a Man's Diſregard to his Maker. "Whoſo hath this World's Goods, and ſeeth his Brother have need, and ſhutteth up his Bowels of Compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?" — Indeed,

This is One of thoſe few Principles, which all who profeſs our holy Religion, profeſs to think neceſſary, however they differ in the Notion of its Application, or the Meaſure of its Practice. Chriſtians of all Sects and Denominations have acknowledged its Obligation; for indeed they can ſcarce look into the ſacred Volume, and eſpecially the New Teſtament, but they will immediately meet with ſome Direction "to love as Brethren – to increaſe and abound in Love one towards another, and to all Men – to do all things with Charity – to be all of one Mind – to be pitiful and courteous, and to add to our Faith Virtue, Patience, Godlineſs, Brotherly-kindneſs, Charity," and the like. I ſhall not therefore add to the Evidence of this Precept, but ſhall only enforce the Conſideration of it in the Words of the Son of Sirach. "Help the Poor for the Commandment's Sake, and turn him not away becauſe of his Poverty. Loſe thy Money for thy Brother & thy Friend, and let it not ruſt under the Stone, to be loſt. Lay up thy Treaſure according to the Commandment of the Moſt-high, and it ſhall bring

thee more Profit than Gold. Shut up Alms in thy Store-houſes, and it ſhall deliver thee from all Affliction. It ſhall fight for thee againſt thine Enemies better than a mighty Shield and a ſtrong Spear."

Upon the Whole, — Every Argument, which can be drawn from Nature, from Morality, or Religion, is here applicable; and Charity and Compaſſion come recommended to us by all thoſe Motives united, which ſeparate, would have Weight with every wiſe and good Man. If we confine our Thoughts to This World only, it is This only, which can ſecure the Peace and promote the Comfort of it; – If we carry them forward, and look into Futurity, it is This only, which can make even That Proſpect pleaſurable and delightful. If the Amiableneſs and Excellency of any Virtue could recommend it as its own Reward, it would need no other Enforcement; – or, if we look only to the Recompenſe of Reward, there is no Virtue which can make ſuch true and ſuch magnificent Propoſals to us. (*) If we conſider it in Itſelf only, It has more peculiar Excellencies and Advantages than any ſingle Grace: and if we view it relatively, It has the cloſeſt Connection with every other moral & religious Duty. — "Above all things, therefore, (as the Apoſtle adviſeth,)

(*) He who pitieth another, recommendeth himſelf; but he who is without Compaſſion, deſerveth it not.

ſeth,) put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfect-neſs." "Seeing ye have purified your Souls in obeying the Truth, thro' the Spirit, ſee that ye love one another with a pure Heart, fervently;" "not in Word, and in Tongue only; but in Deed, and in Truth."

Before I diſmiſs this Argument, I ſhall point out ſome of the miſtaken Forms and Abuſes of the Virtue before us. — And,

Firſt, In modern Times, the chief Improvement of which we have to boaſt, is a Senſe of Humanity. This, notwithſtanding the Selfiſhneſs that ſtill prevails, is the favourite and diſtinguiſhing Virtue of the Age.

On general Manners, and on ſeveral Departments of Society, it has had conſiderable Influence. It has abated the Spirit of Perſecution: It has tempered the Horrors of War; and Man is now more aſhamed than he was in ſome former Ages, of acting as a Savage to Man. Hence, Senſibility is become ſo reputable a Quality, that the Appearance of it is often aſſumed, when the Reality is wanting. But, Softneſs of Manners muſt not be miſtaken for true Senſibility. Senſibility, indeed, tends to produce Gentleneſs in Behaviour; and when ſuch a Behaviour flows from native Affection, it is amiable and valuable. — But,

The Exterior Manner alone may be learned in the

School of the World; and often, too often, is found to cover much unfeeling Hardneſs of Heart.

Profeſſions of Senſibility, therefore, on every trifling Occaſion, joined with exceſſive Softneſs, and a Profuſion of ſentimental Language, afford always much Ground for Diſtruſt. They create the Suſpicion of a ſtudied Character. Frequently, under a negligent & ſeemingly rough Manner, there lies a tender and feeling Heart. Manlineſs and Senſibility are ſo far from being incompatible, that the truly Brave are, for the moſt Part, generous and humane; whilſt the Soft and Effeminate are ſeldom capable of any ſtrong Exertions of Affection. (*) — But,

2dly, As Senſibility ſuppoſes Delicacy of Feeling with Reſpect to others, they who affect the higheſt Senſibility are apt to carry this Delicacy to Exceſs. They are, perhaps, not incapable of the Warmth of diſintereſted Friendſhip; but they are become ſo refined in all their Senſations; they entertain ſuch high Notions of what ought to correſpond in the Feelings of others to their own; they are ſo mightily hurt by every thing which comes not up to their ideal Standard of reciprocal Affection, as to produce Diſquiet and Uneaſineſs to all with whom they are connected. Hence

(*) Cowards are cruel, but the Brave
Love Mercy, and delight to ſave.

Hence unjuſt Suſpicions of their Friends; — hence groundleſs Upbraidings, and Complaints of Unkindneſs; hence a Proneneſs to take Offence at Trifles. In Conſequence of examining their Friends with a microſcopick Eye, what to an ordinary Obſerver would not be unpleaſing, to them is exceedingly diſguſting.

At the Bottom of the Character of ſuch Perſons there always lie much Pride, and Attention to themſelves. This is, indeed, a falſe Species of Senſibility. It is the Subſtitution of a capricious and irritable Delicacy, in the Room of That plain and native Tenderneſs of Heart, which prompts Men to view others with an indulgent Eye, and to make great Allowances for the Imperfections which are ſometimes adherent to the moſt amiable Qualities.

There are Some who found high Claims to themſelves upon the Degree of Intereſt which they take in the Concerns of others. Altho their Senſibility can produce no Benefit to the Perſon who is the Object, they always conceive that it intitles them to ſome profitable Returns. Theſe, often, are Perſons of refined and artful Character; who partly deceive themſelves, and partly employ their Senſibility as a Cover to Intereſt. He who acts from genuine Affection, when he partakes with others in their Joys or Sorrows, thinks not of any Recompenſe to which this gives him

a Title. He follows the Impulſe of his Heart. He obeys the Dictates of his Nature; juſt as the Vine by its Nature produces Fruit, & the Fountain pours forth its Streams. Wherever Views of Intereſt, and Proſpects of Return, mingle with the Feelings of Affection, Senſibility acts an imperfect Part, and intitles us to ſmall Share of Praiſe. — But,

Suppoſing it to be both complete and pure, we are yet, not to reſt the whole Merit of our Character on Senſibility alone. It is, indeed, a happy Conſtitution of Mind – It fits Men for the proper Diſcharge of many Duties, and gives them Acceſs to many virtuous Pleaſures.

It is requiſite for our Acceptance either with God or Man. At the ſame Time, if it remain an inſtinctive Feeling alone, it will form no more than an imperfect Character.

Complete Virtue is of a more exalted and dignified Nature. It ſuppoſes Senſibility, good Temper and benevolent Affections; – It includes them as eſſential Parts, but it reaches further: It ſuppoſes them to be ſtrengthed and confirmed by Principle; it requires them to be ſupported by Juſtice, Temperance, Fortitude, and all thoſe other Virtues, which enable us to act with Propriety, in the trying Situations of Life.

It

It is very poſſible for a Man to poſſeſs the kind Affections in a high Degree, while, at the ſame Time, he is carried away by Paſſion and Pleaſure into many criminal Vices. Almoſt every Man values himſelf on poſſeſſing Virtue in One or Other of its Forms. He wiſhes to lay Claim to ſome Quality which will render him high in his own Eye, and in that of the Public. Hence it is common for many, eſpecially for thoſe in the higher Claſſes of Life, to take much Praiſe to themſelves on Account of their Senſibility, tho' it be in Truth, a Senſibility of a very defective Kind. They relent at the View of Miſery when it is ſtrongly ſet before them. Often too, affected chiefly by the Powers of Deſcription: — It is at feigned & pictured Diſtreſs, more than at real Miſery, that they relent. The Tears which they ſhed upon theſe Occaſions they conſider as undoubted Proofs of their Virtue. They applaud themſelves for the Goodneſs of their Hearts, and conclude, that with ſuch Feelings, they cannot fail of being agreeable to Heaven. At the ſame Time, theſe tranſient Relentings make but ſlight Impreſſion on their Conduct. They give-riſe to few, if any, good Deeds; and ſoon after ſuch Perſons have wept at ſome tragical Tale, they are ready to ſtretch forth the Hand of Oppreſſion; to graſp at the Gain of Injuſtice, or to plunge into the Torrent of criminal Pleaſures.

Now, – This Sort of Senſibility affords no more than a fallacious Claim to Virtue, and gives Men no Ground to think highly of themſelves. We muſt therefore inquire not merely how we feel, but how our Feelings prompt us to act, in Order to aſcertain their real Character.

I ſhall only obſerve further, that Senſibility, when genuine and pure, has a ſtrong Connection with Piety.

That Warmth of Affection and Tenderneſs of Heart which lead Men to feel for their Brethren, and to enter into their Joys and Sorrows, ſhould naturally diſpoſe Men to melt at the Remembrance of the Divine Goodneſs, – to glow with the Admiration of the Divine Majeſty, – to ſend up the Voice of Praiſe and Adoration to the Supreme Being, who makes his Creatures happy.

He who pretends to great Senſibility towards Men, and yet has no Feelings for the high Objects of Religion, no Heart to admire and adore the Great Father of the Univirſe, has Reaſon to diſtruſt the Truth and Delicacy of his Senſibility. He hath Reaſon to ſuſpect, that in ſome Corner of his Heart there lodges a ſecret Depravity, an unnatural Hardneſs and Inſenſibility of Heart, which vitiates his Character.

Let us therefore ſtudy to join all the Parts of Virtue in proper Union; to be conſtantly and uniformly

good,

good, juſt and upright, as well as pitiful and courteous, and pious as well as ſympathiſing. Let us pray to him who made the Heart, that he would fill it with all proper Diſpoſitions, rectify all its Errors; and render it the happy Abode of perſonal Integrity, and ſocial Tenderneſs, of Purity, Benevolence and Devotion.

To Conclude, "Happy is the Man who hath ſown in his Breaſt the Seeds of Benevolence; the Produce thereof ſhall be Charity and Love.

"He aſſiſteth the Poor in their Trouble, and rejoiceth in promoting the Proſperity of all Men.

"The Griefs and Anxieties of Men excite his Compaſſion; he endeavoureth to alleviate the Weight of their Misfortunes, and the Pleaſure of Succeſs rewardeth his Labour.

"As Bloſſoms and Flowers are ſtrewed upon the Earth by the Hand of Spring; as the Kindneſs of Summer produceth the Bounties of Harveſt – ſo the Smiles of Pity ſhed bleſſings on the Children of Misfortune. The Tears of the Compaſſionate are ſweeter than Dew-drops falling from Roſes on the Boſom of the Spring.

"Shut not thine Ear, therefore, againſt the Cries of the Poor; neither harden thine Heart againſt the Calamities of the Innocent.

"When the Fatherleſs call upon thee, when the

Widow's Heart is ſunk, and ſhe imploreth thy Aſſiſtance with Tears of Sorrow; O! pity her Affliction and extend thy Hand to thoſe who have none to help them.

"When thou ſeeſt the naked Wanderer of the Street ſhivering with Cold, and deſtitute of Habitation, let Bounty open thine Heart; Let the Wings of Charity ſhelter him from Death, that thine own Soul may live.

"Whilſt the poor Man groaneth on the Bed of Sickneſs, whilſt the Unfortunate languiſh in the Horrors of a Dungeon, or the hoary Head of Age lifts up a feeble Eye to thee for Pity, O! how canſt thou riot in ſuperfluous Enjoyments, regardleſs of their Wants, and unfeeling of their Woes?

"Fail not, therefore, to be with them that weep, and to mourn with them that mourn.

"Comfort the diſtreſſed, and ſo ſhall Good be rendered to thee from the Almighty; who will love thee more than thy Mother doth." (*)

(*) See further Arguments to this excellent Virtue, in the Diſcourſes on Diſtributing, General Beneficence, &c. in this Work.

Sermon

SERMON CCXI.

Againſt Theft, Diſhoneſty, &c.

Exod. xx. 15. "Thou ſhalt not ſteal."

Having in a preceeding Diſcourſe exhorted the Rich to "put on Bowels of Compaſſion," and liberally to extend their Charity towards their ſuffering Brethren, and that they would let paſs no Opportunity wherein to relieve them,

I ſhall now, by what Conſiderations can be produced, endavour to ſecure their Property from the Purloiner. "Thou ſhalt not ſteal."

Theft, in general, is an unjuſt taking, or detaining, what is lawfully another Man's. (*) He is a Thief who with-holds what ought to be in his Neighbour's Poſſeſſion, or takes from him what he before poſſeſſed; for all Theft preſuppoſeth a Right and Property in another. God is the great Lord and Proprietor of Heaven and Earth, and all things therein. "The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullneſs thereof;" by him, and of him, are all things; according to the Pleaſure of his Will

(*) *Furti Nomine bene intelligitur omnis illicita Uſurpatio Rei alienæ,*

Will they are and were created; and he hath granted unto Man a large Charter of the World, of every thing that is good. "The Heavens are the Lord's, but the Earth hath he given to the Children of Men." A large and regal Gift, whereby he hath made over unto Man all ſublunary things, reſerving unto himſelf the Sovereignty and ſupreme Lordſhip of all, and requiring only from Man the Homage and Payment of Obedience; and yet this large Charter and Donation gave no particular Property unto any: for had Man continued in his happy and innocent State, there would have been no need of any Partition of theſe earthly Poſſeſſions; but common Bleſſings had been enjoyed in common by all. But Sin entering into the World, Men's Deſires after earthly Enjoyments grew immoderate, and their Attempts to attain them injurious to others; ſo that it became neceſſary to preſcribe Bounds and Limits, that each Man knowing his aſſigned Portion, might reſt ſatisfied therewith, and be reſtrained from invading and uſurping on the Rights of others. And there was no other Way to effect this, but by human Laws, mutual Compact, and Agreement, declaring the Rights and Properties of every Man.

So that it is Law which determines Property, and there is nothing ours, or another's, further than This aſſigns it to us. Indeed, Equity muſt ſometimes interpoſe

terpoſe to moderate the Letter of the Law; for in ſome Caſes ſhould we rigorouſly proſecute our Right, and inſiſt upon every Point we might call our due, it would be intolerable, and be a Breach and Violation of the Law of Chriſt, and of Charity, which requires us rather to part with our own in ſmall Matters, than to be vexatious and contentious.

Thus we ſee how all Right and Property firſt came into the World. A general Right, by the Donation of God; and a particular Right, by the Sanction of Laws, allotting to each Man his Portion; which to invade or take from him, is Injuſtice, or Theft.

But, as to Theft, there are many Kinds of it.

The higheſt and chiefeſt, is that which is committed againſt God in Sacrilege: which is an Alienation from God, of whatſoever He hath appropriated to himſelf, or that is upon good Grounds dedicated to the Encouragement and Maintenance of his Honour and Service. Indeed,

The alienating what hath been given to ſuperſtitious and idolatrous Uſes cannot be juſtly branded with this Charge, for it was not ſo much given to God, as to Ignorance & Superſtition; and therefore our Anceſtors have done well and piouſly, in diſſolving them. But, where any thing is indeed conſecrated to God, and ſet apart for the Maintenance and Encouragement of his

Worſhip and Service, it is no leſs than Sacrilege and robbing of God to alienate any Part of This to ſecular Uſes. And of this God himſelf grievouſly complains, "Will a Man rob God? yet ye have robbed Me. But ye ſay, wherein have we robbed Thee? in Tyths and Offerings. Ye are curſed with a Curſe, for ye have robbed me, even this whole Nation."

Certainly thoſe things which are appointed for the Worſhip and Service of God, whether originally by Divine Right or not, yet they cannot be alienated, nor detained without involving the Perſons, or the Nation who doth it, in a great Sin; for This is to rob God of his Right. — Again,

Theft may be committed againſt Men, by an unjuſt Seizure, or Detention, of what belongs to them; and this may be done, either by Fraud or Force.

The moſt open and ſhameleſs Crime, of this Sort, is taking from another what is his, by Force: which, adding Violence againſt his Perſon to Invaſion of his Property, and making every Part of human Life unſafe, is a complicated Tranſgreſſion, of very deep Guilt.

The next Degree is ſecret Theft; privately converting to our Uſe what is not our own. To do This in Matters of great value, is confeſſedly pernicious

Wickedneſs.

Wickedneſs. And tho it were only in what may ſeem a Trifle; yet every Man's Right to the ſmalleſt Part of what belongs to him is the ſame, as to the largeſt: and he ought no more to be wronged of One, than of the Other. — Beſides,

Little Inſtances of Diſhoneſty cauſe great Diſquiet: make the Sufferers diſtruſtful of all about them; ſometimes of thoſe, who are the furtheſt from deſerving it; and make them apprehenſive continually, that ſome heavier Injury will follow. For indeed, almoſt all Offenders begin with ſlight Offences; as more heinous Ones would ſhock them at firſt: but if they once allow themſelves in leſſer Faults, they go on, without Reluctance, by Degrees to ſtill greater, till at laſt they ſcruple at nothing.

We ſhall do well, therefore, to obſerve that as this Command is given to us in a general Term, it binds us in a very general Obſervance of it. There is no Indulgence or Diſpenſation for the greateſt or leaſt Act of Injuſtice. "That which is altogether right, ſhalt thou do, ſaith the Lord; that thou mayeſt live, and inherit the Land, which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee."

When, therefore, we read, "Thou ſhalt not ſteal," all Manner of Injuſtice & Wrong, every thing contrary to any Law, divine or human, to Reaſon, Religion,

or Humanity, affecting the Property of another; whether of Life, Eaſe, Goods, or Liberty, is to be underſtood as forbidden. — And,

If we follow this Idea but a little Way, we ſhall find that to "ſteal," is a thing more common in the World, than is ſuppoſed; and that thoſe Perſons, many Times, who are ſhocked at the Word, are yet intimate with the Offence, and deeply guilty in the Crime which they abhor. (*)

Private Theft and Robbery is a Vice, that ranks with great Propriety under this Claſs, and is truly diſhonourable. But, is it always ſo eſteemed in Caſes of greater Conſequence, and where it is worſe?

The plundering of a Province ſhall be eſteemed a famous Exploit, when That of a ſingle Houſe is a capital Crime. The Invaſion of a Kingdom, though founded in Wrong, and accompanied with terrible Conſequences, and ſhocking Barbarities, yet takes its Name from the Event; and if it be ſucceſsful, is always glorious. (‡) — But further, As

(*) *Torvia Læna Lupum; Lupus ipſe Capellam;*
Florentem Cytiſum ſequitur laſciva Capella.
Increpat his Victor. —— ——

(‡) —— —— *Careat Succeſſibus opto*
Quiſquis ab Eventu Facta notanda putat.

Notwithſtanding it is ſaid, that "Laws in War have no Authority."

As Robbery, and that higheſt Species of it, unjuſt War, are Offences againſt this Law; ſo alſo is Oppreſſion,

ty," (*Inter Arma ſilent Leges*;) yet it may ſeem ſomewhat a hard Caſe for the greater Thieves to puniſh the leſs, and for Public Purloiners and Oppreſſors to ſit in Triumph upon the Lives of the Little Ones; for the Tye of Morality is the ſame upon Both, and they ſtand Both accountable to the ſame Maſter: but Time, Power, and Corruption, give a Reputation to the worſt of Practices; & it is no longer Oppreſſion, when it comes gilded with the Name of Authority. It is no Wonder that the Armed either find Right, or make Right: for, What may he not, Who may what he will? — *Potentiam Malitiâ adjutam quis effugiat? Improbi ut pereant, perdunt.*

In the Sight of Heaven, the greater the Temptation, the leſs is the Sin: and yet, in the Phraſe of the World, it paſſes for an Exploit of Honour for Kings and States to run away with whole Countries, that they have no Colour or Pretence to, (*Statuunt non jurandum, et juruntur. Probitas laudatur, et alget,*) when many a poor Wretch forfeits his Life for the pilfering only of the ſmalleſt Matter.

Petty Rogues ſubmit to Fate,
Whilſt greater Rogues enjoy their State.
Dat Pœnam Corvis, vexat Cenſura Columbas.

Virtue is ſeldom a Match for Power; for "the Rich Man doth Wrong, and threateneth withal; but the poor Man is wronged, and he muſt intreat alſo."

Ut Vitiâ, niſi amputes, latè ſeſe ſpargit, Brachiis ſuis omnia complectens ac implicans; ita Princeps ambitioſus, ſemper aliquid à Proximis ſuo uſurpavit Imperio, niſi ſubindè arcetur.

"He who begetteth a Man hideth his Face; but he who killeth a thouſand is honoured. But, know thou, notwithſtanding, that in this is Error. Cuſtom cannot alter the Nature of Truth; neither can the Opinion of Man deſtroy Juſtice: the Glory and the Shame are miſplaced. There is but *One* Way for Man to be produced; but there are a

preſſion, every Encroachment of the Rich and Powerful upon the Poſſeſſions or Services of their Inferiors or Dependants; taking Advantage either of the Weakneſs or Neceſſity of others, and impoſing ſuch unequal Conditions upon them as they cannot bear, without their Detriment and Ruin: contrary to the expreſs Words of God, "If thou ſell aught unto thy Neighbour, or buyeſt aught at thy Neighbour's Hands, ye ſhall not oppreſs one another."

This Offence, it is be feared, is of a Complexion too familiar. Where almoſt, (may we aſk,) ſhall we find the Perſon who will reſtrain himſelf, when he cannot be reſiſted? who will not lean a little, and be partial towards his own Side, when there is nothing but Reaſon to be urged againſt him? Here then is the Touch-ſtone of Sincerity; the Tryal of true Virtue. Where is the Man, who can attend, without a Monitor, to the Whiſpers of Equity; Who is an Advocate with himſelf for every One, who has a Claim upon him; Who ſees his own Cauſe, with the ſame Eye, with which he looks upon That of another; his own Reaſons not magnified by Self-intereſt, nor another's dimi-

thouſand by which he may be deſtroyed. There is no Praiſe, or Honour to him who giveth Being to another; but Triumphs and Empire are the Rewards of Murder.

A Wit's a Feather, and a Chief's a Rod;
An honeſt Man's the nobleſt Work of God.

diminiſhed by Inability to maintain them; Who can be oppoſed by his Inferiors, and feel no Reſentment; be gentle, where he might be inſolent with Safety; civil, to thoſe he has obliged; pleaſed with ſuch as have Expectations from him; attending to Conſiderations, of which he is not to be reminded; impoſing no Hardſhips where they muſt be born; and offering no Inſults, where they cannot be returned; In a Word, Where is the Man who finds no Inducement to do Wrong, in the Power of doing it — Such a Man is a Maſter in all the Virtues and Duties which belong to the Intercourſe of Men with each other — He is perfect in that Precept of the Goſpel, which comprehends the Law and the Prophets, "of doing as he would be done unto." — But,

This Character, as it is excellent, ſo it is proportionaly rare: for, as the Apoſtle aſks, "Do not rich Men oppreſs you, and draw you before the Judgment Seats?" not, indeed, now, to moleſt you in the Profeſſion of your Faith; a Point concerning which they are not apt to be anxious either for you, or themſelves; but in your Property, perhaps, which you are as loath to part with. The Benefit of the Laws, in many Caſes, cannot be obtained eaſily — When rich Men, therefore, taking Advantage of this Difficulty, withhold the Right of their Inferiors, under the Colour

of referring it to the Law, they rob; when under the Protection of their own Greatneſs, or of Immunities meant for better Purpoſes, they refuſe, or but delay to comply with the moſt equitable Obligations, they ſteal.

If a Magiſtrate pervert, or refuſe, or delay Juſtice; if they ſell it, or load it with unneceſſary Expence or Difficulties, (when it is already ſo grievouſly overcharged with them,) their Injuſtice is worſe than That of others, in as much as it is aggravated with Breach of Truſt and Treachery. It is a Robbery committed by a Guardian. — But,

Theſe Facts of Oppreſſion, it is hoped, are uncommon: — There are other Abuſes of Power, of an inferior Claſs, indeed, and Importance, ſingly taken; but making up, it is to be feared, in Number, what they want in Weight.

The Deſcent is gradual, thro' the ſeveral Stations of human Life, there is a continued Succeſſion and Chain of Pre-eminence and Subjection down to the very loweſt; and when we abuſe our Superiority, of whatever Species or Degree, and have Recourſe to our own little Greatneſs to ſupport us in doing Wrong, we commit the double Offence of Diſhoneſty and Oppreſſion - and, if we take Advantage in any Caſe of another's Diſtreſs and Neceſſities, we ſwell the Account yet further, by adding Cruelty to the Number

of

of our Tranſgreſſions, or adulterate Goods to the Diſadvantage of the Buyer, or detain the Pledges given us by others.

Theſe, and the like, though not condemned by human Laws, are yet guilty by the Law of God, of no leſs Sin than Oppreſſion, a Sin hateful both to God and Man. The Prophet calls it, "a plucking off their Skin from them, and their Fleſh from their Bones, and chopping them in Pieces, as for the Pot." All Unmercifulneſs and Hard-dealings with others is a Kind of Theft. For the Law of Nature, and much more the Law of Charity, obliges us ſo to deal with others, as not to give them Cauſe to complain of us to God; and in the Bitterneſs of their Spirits to imprecate on us the Severity of his Wrath and Vengeance.

A Man may be guilty of cruel Injuſtice in demanding no more than his own. If a Crediter require only ſo much, as is really due to him; if he do it at a Time, which, tho legal, is not reaſonable, or in a grievous Manner; and ſtill worſe, if his Deſigns be not ſo much to ſecure his own Right, as to ruin his Adverſary, he is to be ranked with the moſt injurious Oppreſſors; except he can think an Injury is the leſs becauſe it is owing to Revenge inſtead of Avarice.

To ſuch a Perſon as this, in its full Strength, be-

longs the Parable of our Lord, and the Threatning that follows — "O! thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee all that Debt, becauſe thou deſiredſt me: ſhould not thou alſo have had Compaſſion on thy Fellow-ſervant, even as I had Pity on thee. And his Lord was wrath, and delivered him to the Tormentors, till he ſhould pay all that was due unto him. So likewiſe ſhall my Heavenly Father do alſo unto you, if ye, from your Hearts, forgive not every One his Brother their Treſpaſſes." — Again,

To detain from others what is their Due, either by Equity or Compact, is another Kind of Theft. How many are there, whoſe profuſe Riot and Luxury are maintained at the Expence of the poor Creditor's Ruin. How many with-hold the Hire of poor Labourers, who, when wearied out in Service, cannot receive for neceſſary Refreſhment that ſmall Reward which their Labours with the Toil & Sweat of their Brows, required and earned. "Thou ſhalt not oppreſs an hired Servant, that is poor and needy; at his Day thou ſhalt give him his Hire, neither ſhall the Sun go down upon it. For he is poor, and ſetteth his Heart upon it; leſt he cry againſt thee unto the Lord, and it be Sin unto thee." And in all our Bargains and Agreements we are bound to perform them, though never ſo much to our Prejudice, unleſs the other

other Party will releaſe the Contract. For this is one Character of a good Man, "that he ſweareth to his Neighbour and diſappointeth him not, tho it were to his own Hindrance;" but upon Demand is ready and willing to perform and execute his Agreement.

Again, — Another Kind of Theft, is, in Buying and Selling; This is of a very large Extent: for the Subtilty of Man hath found out ſo many Artifices to defraud and over-reach others, that to recount them, is almoſt as difficult as to eſcape them. Such are the falſe Weights and Meaſures, that are an Abomination to the Lord; falſe and counterfeited Wares; over-commending, or undervaluing of Goods for Advantage, with many other unjuſt Contrivances, which Men's Conſciences better know than another can ſuggeſt. The Apoſtle hath ſufficiently cautioned and threatened ſuch Men; "Let no Man go beyond, or defraud his Brother in any Matter, becauſe the Lord is the Avenger of all ſuch." There is a Day coming when all falſe Weights will be weighed, and the ſcanty Meaſures meaſured, by a Standard that is infallibly true. Poſſibly we may deal ſo craftily, that thoſe whom we over-reach can take no Advantage againſt us to right themſelves by Law; but we ſhould remember, that the Great Judge will at the laſt Day avenge them upon us. Then all Accounts ſhall be

balanced, and what remains ſhall be certainly paid; though not to the Injured, yet to the Juſtice of God, who is the great and univerſal Creditor.

As this Practice, then, in theſe ſeveral Reſpects, is unlawful, it ſurely ſcarce needs to be added, that whatever things it is unlawful to do, it is unlawful to adviſe, encourage, help, or protect others in doing; that buying, receiving, or concealing ſtolen Goods, knowing them to be ſuch, is becoming a Partener in the Stealth; (*) and that being, in any Way, a Patron, Aſſiſtant or Tool of Injuſtice, is no leſs evidently wrong, than being the immediate and principal Agent in it. — But,

Beſides the Explanation given, the utmoſt Limits of the Command before us, require, that we neither deny ourſelves, or thoſe who belong to us, what is fit for our, & their Station; which is one Kind of Robbery: nor omit to relieve the Poor, according to our Ability, which is another Kind. For, whatever we enjoy of worldly Plenty is given to us in Truſt, that we

(*) "The Receiver is as bad as the Thief," is a Maxim that ſeems more cenſorious than the Law, which inflicts only Tranſportation on the Receiver, but Death on the Felon; yet it is true in Fact, becauſe ſuch Perſons are in their Principles, as diſhoneſt, tho' they have not Courage to venture their Necks in the Employment.

Αμφοτεροι Κλωπες ϗ Οδξαμενω ϗ ο Κλεψας.

Qui Furti celat, Furti eſt Particeps.

we ſhould take our own Share with Moderation, and diſtribute out the Remainder with Liberality.

And, as they who have but little, will, moſt or all of them, at one Time or other, find thoſe who have leſs; very few, if any, are exempted from giving ſome Alms. And whoever either penuriouſly or thoughtleſſly neglects his proper Share of this Duty, is unjuſt to his Maker, as well as to his Fellow-Creatures.

For the Good, which God hath placed in our Hands for the Poor, is undoubtedly, as the Scripture declares it, "THEIR DUE." He hath given Them no Right to ſeize it: but he hath bound Us not to with-hold it from them.

Sermon

SERMON CCXII.

On the ſame Subject.

Sin and Danger of it.

Exod. xx. 15. "Thou ſhalt not ſteal."

Having already given a full Explanation of theſe Words, and ſhewn the ſeveral Ways whereby Theft is committed, I ſhall proceed to lay before you ſuch Conſiderations as may, in all Reaſon, make us become due Obſervers of the Command before us.

And firſt, — That which gives Strength to all Laws, is the Power and Authority wherewith they are backed to puniſh the Violators of them; This is the Strength of the Chriſtian Laws, that "there is One Law-giver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy."

In the Delivery of the Law, therefore, (of which the Words before us are a Part,) God ſhewed himſelf to be of great Power, and exceeding Might: It was "with much awful Solemnity, with Thunder and Lightning,

Lightning, with Smoke and exceeding Trembling." (*)

Precepts delivered in such a Manner, we may be sure, God will expect us to obey with more than ordinary Care; accordingly we find this Charge given at the Summary of the Whole, "that we be careful to obey and do them, for they are our Life."

Agreeably whereto we find the great Apostle, when writing to the Thessalonians of the "former Commandments

(*) Authority is the main Support of all Government.

The prodigious Solemnity with which the *Ten Commandments* were delivered, from a Mountain burning with Fire, by the Voice of God, gave them a Distinction above the rest of the Law of Moses; though it was all derived from One Fountain of Wisdom, and enjoined by the self-same Authority.

The People of the Jews could not but pay a peculiar Respect to Precepts, uttered by the Almighty himself in their own Ears: & their Posterity, and all Men indeed, must be led to think, that these Laws were not selected from the rest, and accompanied with such Marks of Honour, without some superior Merit; but the Observance of them must be either more eminently acceptable to the Supreme Lawgiver, or, which is in Reality the same, more necessary for the Good of Men.

The Subject-matter of these Commands appears also upon Examination to be answerable to such Expectations. They contain the great Principles of human Duty, the fundamental Rules of Religion and Morality. Besides the great Authority impressed on them, there is an original intrinsick Value in all the Laws which have found a Place in That literally Divine Composition, "of which the Tables were the Work of God, and the Writing was the Writing of God."

Serm. CCXII.

mandments delivered unto them," repeats This alſo, againſt all Fraud, Theft, and Deceit whatever. "That no Man go beyond, or defraud his Brother in any Matter for the Lord is the Avenger of all ſuch."

There are many ſevere Denunciations of God's Wrath to be executed at the great Day againſt the Wicked and Unrighteous.

But, becauſe unjuſt Men, (who have ſet their Hearts upon This World, and who appear to center all their Deſires in it,) are more affected with the Conſideration of temporary, than further Evils, I ſhall therefore obſerve here ſome of the ordinary and common Methods of God's avenging Juſtice againſt ſuch Sinners, even in This World. And,

Firſt, The Providence of God ſeldom ſuffers Theft, Fraud and Injuſtice to ſucceed long. (*)

He ſees every Spring and Movement of the Heart, and obſerves every Paſſion that ſtirs within it, when it is ſoured with the Rancour of ſettled Hatred, preyed upon by the never-dying Worm of inveterate Malice, ſwelled and diſturbed with Envy, or inclined to blaſt our Neighbour's Reputation, by Calumny and Detraction. — No Cloud or Darkneſs can ſcreen our Thoughts from his View; they would all diſtinctly appear before him, "though they were more than the Sea,

(*) *Cuſtam Pœna premit Comes infanda per Orbem.*

"Sea, and our Counſels profounder than the great Deep."

Though our Heart were doubled and folded up with the moſt artful Fraud, "yet as a Veſture he would unfold it."

He deſpiſes the admired Contrivances of the conſummate Villain, and laughs him to Scorn; "he fruſtrateth the Deſigns of the Liars, and maketh them mad; he turneth wiſe Men backward, and maketh their Knowledge fooliſh." "Woe unto him, (ſaith he by his Prophet,) that encreaſeth that which is not his, and to him that ladeth himſelf with thick Clay; ſhall they not riſe up ſuddenly that ſhall bite thee, and awake that ſhall torment thee? and thou ſhalt be for Booties unto them."

Excellent to this Purpoſe is the Advice of Solomon; who, when ſpeaking of the Vice before us, joins with it, the Sin of deepeſt Dye, Murder itſelf; as a natural Conſequence of it.

"My Son, (ſays he,) if Sinners entice thee, conſent thou not – If they ſay, come with us, let us lay wait for Blood; let us lurk privily (*) for the innocent without

(*) *Noctem et Tenebras amant Tenebriones.*
"If One do but ſee them, they are in the Terrors of Death."
Nox, Amor, et Vinum, magnorum Malorum Cauſæ ſunt.
In Opere exiſtens Fur non cogitratur. — Perit Soror ſuo Indicio
cum. CARR.

out Cauſe – Let us ſwallow them up alive; and whole, as thoſe that go down into the Pit; – we ſhall find all precious Subſtance, we ſhall fill our Houſes with Spoil; – Caſt in thy Lot among us; let us all have one Purſe. My Son, walk not thou in the Way with them; refrain thy Foot from their Path. For their Feet run to Evil, and make-haſte to ſhed Blood; they lay wait for their own Blood; they lurk privily for their own Lives. So are the Ways of every One that is greedy of Gain; which taketh-away the Life of the Owners thereof."

So that what I would obſerve, is, not the Vanity and Uncertainty of all worldly Enjoyments in general; but that wicked Men, who endanger their Souls for the ſinful Gains of this World, have Reaſon in particular to be apprehenſive of the precarious State and Condition of their Affairs. (*)

There is no Man who raiſes his Fortune upon the Ruins of his Conſcience and Integrity; (how great a Maſter ſoever he may be in the Arts of Diſſimulation,) but will be in Danger, one Time or other, of being found out. (‡)

His

(*) *Non habet Eventus barbara Præda bonos.*

(‡) *Nunquam ſperare debes, ſi quid turpe feceris, te latitaturum; Quamvis enim lateas alios, tute tamen tibi conſcius eris.*
Luna videt, —— Sidera Teſtes, —— intendunt Oculi.

His Deſigns may be deeply laid; his Schemes may be cunningly contrived; his outward Behaviour may be ſo plauſible as not to be ſuſpected: he may have ſucceeded in his dark Practices ſo often without Diſcovery, as to be confirmed in his Opinion, "that he ſhall never be found out;" he may have blamed the Miſconduct of others who have miſcarried in their wicked Enterprizes, and fancy that he himſelf, in the ſame Caſes, could have uſed greater Dexterity, and that however they were taken in the crafty Wilineſs that they had imagined, yet he could have eſcaped.

But, after all, he cannot be more wary to attempt a Villany, than others will be watchful to diſcover him. The Laws were made for the Security of the Community, and the Breaker of them is a common Enemy. To hurt one Man, is to alarm the Neighbourhood: and every Man that regards his own Safety, will in This Reſpect be concerned for that of others; and will think it his Intereſt to purſue the Invader of it, and bring him to Juſtice, both that he may be freed from any future Apprehenſion of Injuries from him, and that others, being terrified by the Example of his Puniſhment, may be afraid to offend.

It is very rare that any notable Crime hath eſcaped being brought to Light; and the Numbers yearly convicted and condemned to the Puniſhments they deſer-

ved, might convince any Man, that was not too fond of his own Parts, that running the ſame Hazzards, he would not be likely to be more fortunate. No Man that does Evil is ever ſecure, however ſecret. He may look about to ſee who ſeeth, but he is not ſure he is not ſeen. If the Darkneſs of the Night invite, the Silence of it often betrays – If the Villain goes alone, there is uſually a Miſgiving of Heart and Fearfulneſs to attempt; there is uſually a Slowneſs to diſpatch what was intended, and a Diſorder in his own Scheme, and an Invitation of Reſiſtance; all which tend to Diſcovery. In the Confidence of an Accomplice, there is no better Security. What his Fidelity would hide, his Inadvertence may diſcloſe. What the preſent Friendſhip conceals, future Diſagreements may lay open. Who is ſafe from the Weakneſs, or Folly, or Paſſion of a frail Criminal? What wicked Man is above the Temptation that may be offered for a wanted Diſcovery? What Taciturnity is to be expected in the Decay of Parts or Loſs of Senſes, which in the Courſe of Life may happen to any Man? What Sagacity can foreſee all the Queſtions that may be put to ſuſpected Perſons? or be able to evade the Force of them, or to contrive a Defence ſo connected, ſo uniform, ſo agreeing in all its Parts, as the Audience ſhall not fail to pity the falſely accuſed, and re-

tire

tire under a full Perſuaſion of their Innocence? Or what, if a wicked Partner ſhould repent, and not being able to make Reſtitution for the Wrongs he hath done, ſhould, under the Terrors of his Conſcience, think himſelf obliged, in his laſt Moments, when he is launching into Eternity, to confeſs his Crimes, and fearing no other Reproach like that of his own Heart, to declare who it was that betrayed him into them, or aſſiſted him in them?

But if Men of this bad Character are uſually ſo hardened, that nothing of this needeth to be feared, (tho This in Fact hath often happened,) yet who is always ſo wary and circumſpect in doing Ill, and after he hath done it, that he can be ſure he ſhall not betray himſelf? There is a Hurry and a Confuſion that attends Guilt, in the midſt of which thoſe very things are often done to cover, which effectually expoſe the wicked Perſon. God Almighty will infatuate him, that he may deſtroy himſelf. "He is afraid where no Fear is. He fleeth when no Man purſueth," and, as is were, offers himſelf up to the Puniſhments he ſeeks to eſcape.

How often has it been known, that Men, who by ſome little fraudulent Arts and Deſigns, have ſet out boldly into the World, and perhaps for ſome conſiderable Time enjoyed an uninterrupted Flow of Proſperity in it, have yet by Degrees; and ſometimes

all of a ſudden been driven back by a contrary Current notwithſtanding all the Efforts of human Wit and Induſtry, to bear them up againſt it? (*)

In the 20th Chapter of Job, we have a very fine and delicate Deſcription of the Tendency and Event of thoſe unjuſt Meaſures which wicked Men employ in the Proſecution of their worldly Deſigns.

Whether Zophar, (who is there introduced as the Speaker,) may be ſuppoſed as ſpeaking by the Spirit of God, is not neceſſary for me to inquire; It is ſufficient to my preſent Purpoſe, that he ſpeaks the general Senſe and Obſervation of Mankind, and appeals to common Experience, from the Beginning of the World, for the Truth of what he ſays. — But,

Why need I multiply Authorities where almoſt every Ones own Experience and Obſervation aſſures him of it. (‡) — For indeed,

Had not God declared that his Providence is concerned in bringing to Light the hidden things of Diſhoneſty; yet ſuch Perſons and Practices, even in the common

(*) *Fallit ſæpiſſimè Nautas Orion, Fortuna nunquam perpetuò eſt bona.* "An Inheritance may be gotten haſtily at the Beginning; but the End thereof ſhall not be bleſſed." "Man knoweth not his Time, as the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as Birds are caught in the Snare, ſo are the Sons of Men ſnared in an evil Time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them."

(‡) *Supplicia et Pœnas ſceleratûm expendimus omnes.*

common natural Way and Tendency of them, are apt to diſcover and confound themſelves.

They that are conſcious to themſelves that they are working Miſchief, muſt alſo be Apprehenſive of the fatal Diſcovery; – Amidſt the many croſs Ways of Diſhoneſty, they know not which to chuſe, for in every one there is Danger, and they expect to meet an Adverſary; and many indeed there are, as induſtrious to find them out, as they are to prevent it; – it being the Intereſt of thoſe againſt whom they are practiſed to diſcover them.

So that, even ſetting aſide the Conſideration of God's juſt Providence, it cannot be expected ſo long as the Paſſions of Men are concerned for their Intereſts, (as they always very nearly will,) that Theft & Deceit ſhould proſper long; (*) and, in this Caſe, what the Conſequence muſt be, is too evident, [viz] the bringing a ſhameful Life to a more ignominious and ſhameful Death; (‡) and, we may add to this, in the

(*) *Diù non latent Scelera.* This Maxim, "Let a thing be ever ſo ſecret, yet it will be diſcovered one Time or other," is very uncertain, if not falſe; for it has no other Ground than thoſe things that have been found out; and, for what we know, there may be as many that never did, or ever will come to our Knowledge: Our own Conſciencies, perhaps, may convince us of ſome.

(‡) Zeno Citaeus *Servum in Furto deprenſum cædi juſſit: cumque is ſe excuſaret,* Sibi fuiſſe in Fatis, ut furaretur; - *et* in Fatis cædi, *inquit.*

Ut Corpus ſequitur Umbra, ità Pœna Juſtitiæ Comes eſt.

Juſtitiam Injuria provocat. Serm. CCXII.

the mean while, the Miſery they muſt undergo thro' Fear of Detection, (*) of Shame and Puniſhment conſequent thereon, which is more than a Counterbalance for all they can acquire by their Theft and Knavery whatever. For, "as the Upright ſhall dwell in the Land, & the Perfect remain in it: ſo the wicked ſhall be cut off from the Earth, and the Tranſgreſſors ſhall be rooted out of it." (‡) God

(*) *Veloces ſunt Latronum Pedes.*

He that is guilty of any enormous Sin lives in perpetual Terror; and whilſt he expects to be puniſhed, he puniſhes himſelf: and whoſoever deſerves it, expects it; and tho he be not detected, he is ſtill in Apprehenſion that he may be ſo.

Thieves dread the ſearching Eye of Pow'r,
And never feel the quiet Hour.

Beſides the Wickedneſs, therefore, of theſe Ways, the Folly of them is truly plain.

(‡) The temporal Puniſhment, which the Scripture pronounces, is an ample & ſufficient Reſtitution; and therefore Zaccheus, when he was converted, offers a four-fold Reſtitution to thoſe he had wronged. "If I have taken any thing from any Man by falſe Accuſation, I reſtore him four-fold." And yet beſides this Reſtitution, ſometimes the Offenders were put to Death, eſpecially if to their Theft they added Cruelty and Oppreſſion. This appears in the Parable of Nathan, when he had artificially aggravated the Rich Man's Crime, in taking away the poor Man's Lamb, he ſo raiſed David's Compaſſion and Indignation, that he pronounces this Sentence; "The Man that hath done This thing ſhall ſurely die; and he ſhall reſtore the Lamb four-fold, becauſe he did this thing, and becauſe he had no Pity."

So that under the Law of Moſes, it was lawful, in ſome Caſes, to puniſh

God will cut ſuch Men off, by ſome untimely Stroke, and immature Judgment; either by the Hand of human Juſtice with Shame and Reproach, or of divine Juſtice with Wrath and Vengeance. For ſo it is threatened, "Thou, O God, ſhalt bring them down into the Pit of Deſtruction; — Blood-thirſty and deceitful Men ſhall not live out half their Days." (i.e) they ſhall not live to That Period which the Courſe and Strength of Nature would otherwiſe permit; but the Hand of God will cut them off in the midſt of their Days and Sins together. — But,

It may be that a Sinner may ſucceed herein, for a conſiderable Time; and perhaps for the Courſe of his Life; yet he hereby renders the Circumſtances of his Death ſo much the more wretched and deplorable; (*) for "What is the Hope of the Hypocrite when God takes away his Soul?" — "It is an eaſy thing unto the Lord

punish a Thief with Death; tho', uſually, Reſtitution was only required. Indeed, our Law condemns them to Death; and yet we ſee how many perſiſt in this wicked Courſe of Life notwithſtanding that ſevere Puniſhment; and if the Fear of Death will not deter them, That of Reſtitution would be much leſs effectual.

(*) In Health and Affluence Religion may be accounted Madneſs; but when we come to die, our Sentiments and Language, (if we retain our Senſes,) will be greatly altered, and Doubts and Fears will ſerve only to aggravate the Pangs of our Diſſolution.

Serm. CCXII.

Lord in the Day of Death, to reward every Man according to his Ways." — "The Affliction of an Hour maketh a Man forget Pleaſure: and in his End his Deeds ſhall be diſcovered."

"Bread of Deceit is ſweet to a Man; but afterwards his Mouth ſhall be filled with Gravel." (*)

The Bleſſings of Man's external Part, are Health, Vigour, and Proportion. The greateſt of theſe is Health. And, What Health is to the Body, even That is Honeſty to the Soul.

When a Man is deſcending to the Grave, and muſt enter into an eternal State of Happineſs or Miſery, according as he hath obeyed or diſobeyed the Laws of his Maker, what are all the Pleaſures of Sin which he hath enjoyed for a Seaſon? What Security is it to him

(*) Diſhoneſty is a Sin ſo much againſt the Light of Nature, that Conſcience, if not totally hardened, will be for ever tormenting them with uneaſy Thoughts and Reflections; for the Fear of Detection, of Shame, and Puniſhment incident to it, muſt needs be a continual Miſery to them. But what is acquired fairly and with a good Conſcience, by an honeſt and lawful Calling, whether more or leſs, it brings this Contentment with it, that a Man may quietly rejoice in it, as it is the Portion which the Providence and Bounty of God, his moſt gracious and heavenly Father, hath offered him. He drinks no Widow's Tears, nor Orphan's Blood; he eats not the Fleſh of the Poor, nor breaks the Bones of the Needy: his Conſcience, therefore, checks him not when feeding on what his honeſt Labour & Induſtry has procured: it is a Repaſt, tho ſmall; and far more entertaining to him, than all the heightened Delicacies of rich Oppreſſors.

him to have been able to evade the Examination of an earthly Magiſtrate, and to have eſcaped the Puniſhment aſſigned to the Breach of human Laws? The Sentence that he hath been ſo often warned of, and which ſeemed at a Diſtance, now lingereth not, and the juſt Vengeance of God is ready to overtake him. In vain doth he call on the Hills to hide him, and to the Rocks to cover him; for Rocks and Hills ſhall themſelves be diſſolved, and no Rock, but One, will remain for the Righteous, and that Rock is Chriſt, who is the Rock of Ages. "All things will be naked and open to the all-ſeeing Eye of the Supreme Judge, with whom he now hath to do." Nor hath there been any thing heretofore to ſecret, which ſhall not now be made manifeſt.

An unjuſt Man, who, for ſome trifling and inconſiderable, or even the greateſt Gain by theſe Ways, hath endangered his Soul, would then, no Doubt, give all the World, (were he Maſter of it,) for the Teſtimony of Innocence, and the Favour of God. (*)

Aſk

(*) The more effectually to diſcover the Folly of Men, in endangering the Loſs of their Souls, upon any worldly Proſpects, our Saviour, in the Goſpel, puts a Caſe which never did, and in all Probability never will happen. He ſuppoſes that a Sinner, by ſuch a Loſs, might make himſelf Maſter of all the World, and have all the Wealth, and Pleaſure, and Honours of it entirely at his Command: yet even

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no Impreſſion on them at a Diſtance, have changed their Sentiments, and dropped their falſe Confidence; have ſeen their Guilt, and dreaded their Danger, when it was too late, perhaps, to think of deploring the one, or eſcaping the other.

Let a Man of Humanity reflect upon a whole Family in Trouble; their Minds uneaſy; their Health and Reſt broken; their neceſſary Buſineſs neglected; tempted to murmur againſt God, and to curſe ſuch as have been the Occaſion of their Trouble, who have robbed, oppreſſed, or defrauded them: let him ſee this, and ſay, whether the very Thought of ſuch Cruelty will not make him abhor and reſolve againſt every Act of Injuſtice, which muſt, of Neceſſity, give his Neighbour ſo much Sorrow and Grief of Heart.

If this does not affect him, (for there are ſome People ſo deſtitute of Humanity and Grace, that provided they may be eaſy, and can get or keep what they have gotten, are not much concerned for the Sufferings of others,) let us ſuppoſe him upon his Death-bed; his Eyes (under) open ſentiments of his Conſcience are even choked and ſtifled by the Means of them.

A falſe Firmneſs and Reſolution, joined with the Shame of un-ſaying and un-doing all a Man hath ſaid, and done before, may poſſibly carry him headlong on

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open, his Conſcience awake, and calling-to-mind the Evil he has done his Neighbour, whether by Cunning, Power, Violence, or Fraud; dreading the Conſequence; not knowing how to make Satisfaction for the Injuries he has done; aſhamed to own his Crimes, and yet not able to bear the Thoughts of them; juſt going to leave the World under the greateſt Uncertainties of what is like to be his Portion in a few Moments after this: Can there be a Caſe, a Condition, more terrible, more miſerable than this? And yet how many are there, who, in all human Appearance, leave the World under theſe moſt aſtoniſhing Circumſtances? Indeed,

It muſt be owned, &c. ☞ (under)

It muſt be owned that there are, now and then, Inſtances of Men who have gone thro even this laſt and terrible Conflict unſhaken, and after leading very diſſolute Lives, have yet died hard (as the Expreſſion is), without any ſeeming Concern for what was paſt, or Dread of what was to follow; yet is not their Caſe better than of thoſe who die under the Fear of God's Diſpleaſure. Their Ignorance or Unconcernedneſs will not alter the Decrees of God, who has expreſsly declared, that they that have done Evil preſumptuouſly, and not repented, "ſhall go into everlaſting Fire."

Whenever ſuch an Effect, &c. ☞ (under)

Pains to corrupt his Mind with bad Principles, and lives long in the Practice of them, he may at laſt root and ground them ſo faſt, till ſcarce any Application whatſoever is able to loſen them, and till the natural Sentiments of his Conſcience are even choked and ſtifled by the Means of them.

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Whenever ſuch an Effect happens, it is owing to one or more of theſe Cauſes: either to ill Principles, early and deeply imbibed; or to a certain Obſtinacy and Sullenneſs of Temper, peculiar to ſome Men; or laſtly, either to a natural or acquired Stupidity.

If a Man begins betimes with himſelf, and takes Pains to corrupt his Mind with bad Principles, and lives long in the Practice of them, he may at laſt root and ground them ſo faſt, till ſcarce any Application whatſoever is able to loſen them, and till the natural Sentiments of his Conſcience are even choked and ſtifled by the Means of them.

A falſe Firmneſs and Reſolution, joined with the Shame of un-ſaying and un-doing all a Man hath ſaid, and done before, may poſſibly carry him headlong on

to his Death, without owning, or perhaps ſeeing his Danger. Groſs and heavy Minds, unimproved by Education and Inſtruction, have at length arrived at ſuch a Degree of Stupidity, as to think of nothing beyond this World, nor of any thing in it, but what immediately affects their Senſes. And even Spirits more refined may, by a perpetual and total Immerſion in bodily Pleaſures and repeated Acts of Tranſgreſſion, arrive at laſt to the ſame Degree of Inſenſibility.

In all ſuch Caſes, and by the Help of ſuch Qualities as theſe, it is poſſible, we grant, and it ſometimes happens, that Men have gone out of the World, as they lived in it, defying Conſcience and the Power of it, and deriding the Flames of Hell, till they were in the midſt of them. But theſe are rare Inſtances; and therefore, of no Force when oppoſed to the general Conviction and Feelings of Mankind upon the ſame Occaſions. They prove only that there are Monſters in the Moral, as well as in the Natural World, which make nothing againſt the ſettled Laws and regular Courſe of either.

But however it may be with ſome Men in this Life, or even at their Death; however they may eſcape the Reproach of Men, and the Sword of Juſtice, and the Checks & Upbraidings of their own Conſciences, yet they will certainly be eternally miſerable. — And I

Who,

Who, then, would periſh everlaſtingly for gaining only the things that are periſhable?

Earthly Goods, (much leſs ſuch as are ill-gotten,) profit not in the Day of Wrath; neither will they avert the juſt Judgment of God againſt Men, but will rather more ſeverely increaſe it.

"Nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God." Where then ſhall their Portion be, but in "the Lake, burning with Fire and Brimſtone, that is unquenchable, which is the ſecond Death; where the Lord will ſpoil their Souls, as they have ſpoiled the Goods of their Neighbours."

God makes this Enquiry by his Prophet; "Who ſhall aſcend into the Tabernacle of the Lord? or who ſhall reſt upon his Holy Hill?" To which the Anſwer is, "He that hath done no Evil to his Neighbour;" and, in another Place, "He that hath not ſpoiled by Violence."

When therefore we conſider "the Terrors of the Lord," denounced againſt wicked and impenitent Sinners in his revealed Will; when we put the Queſtion to ourſelves, as it concerns every one to do, that believes thoſe Terrors — "Who is able to dwell in everlaſting Burnings?" — how is it poſſible, while at the ſame Time our Hearts condemn us, that All we ever

ſaw with our Eyes, ſhould be able to give us, I do not ſay, any true Satisfaction, but any tolerable Support, under ſuch terrible Expectations? — It might more reaſonably be concluded, on the other Side, that what a Sinner has gained by the Loſs of his Soul, (tho it were even the whole World,) inſtead of contributing any thing to his preſent Happineſs, ſhould ſerve only to enflame his Guilt, and "torment him before the Time."

How will Sinners be one Day aſhamed and confounded to think, that in Exchange of a few and inſignificant Gains, which were but for a Seaſon, they have plunged themſelves, Soul and Body, into a State of endleſs Perdition? — Not ſuch a Perdition as ſuppoſes their Souls annihilated or extinct; That indeed, ſince Matters are come to this Paſs, would be to wicked Men, a deſireable Way of loſing their Souls; tho One would think too, it ſhould afford but a poor Conſolation to a Man endued with a Soul naturally immortal, to expect to die like the Beaſts that periſh, and to have lived ſo, as to render ſuch a Death really eligible. — But, tho no Man, who conſiders the Worth and Dignity of his Soul, would be content to loſe it, even in This Senſe, yet This is a Refuge which the Condemned cannot fly to. To loſe a Soul, in the Senſe of Scripture, is not to have a Period put to its Being,

Being, but to have it continually and forever perishing in the most afflicting Circumstances of Agony and Despair. "Where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched." — But further,

Besides the Disadvantages of Theft, as already mentioned, it is not of short or light Effect even in This World; It ordinarily, if not constantly, entails a Curse upon what is thus unjustly acquired; and had not the Scriptures, in express Terms, declared that "Wealth gotten by Vanity shall be diminished;" yet there is nothing more agreeable to the common Observation of Mankind in all Ages. It is very significantly expressed against such Acquisitions, that "they trouble a Man's House," God many Times depriving the Children of the Effects of the Father by legal Process; and sometimes, in his just Judgment, even permitting Luxury, Riot, and Intemperance, to disperse the Wealth unjustly acquired: thus one Sin becoming the Avenger of another: accordingly Job says concerning such Men, that "they lay up Iniquity for their Children." (*) Therefore

(*) *A malo Auctore emit. Accepit hoc Munus Conditione malâ.* "He that getteth by defrauding his own Soul, getteth for others that shall spend his Goods riotously." *Malè parta, malè dilabuntur. Sic venit, sic vadit.* Ill-gotten Wealth is commonly wasted by a profuse Heir, in Riot and Luxury, and seldom descends to the third Generation. *De malè quæsitis, vix gaudet tertius Heres.*

Therefore, if we deſire to proſper in the World, and to have our Subſtance increaſe and multiply, we muſt be ſure that no Gain of Robbery or Oppreſſion, Fraud or Deceit, be found in our Hands, for This will devour our lawful Acquiſitions.

"Wealth, gotten by Vanity, ſhall be diminiſhed; but he that gathereth by Labour, ſhall increaſe." "A good Man leaveth an Inheritance to his Children's Children; and the Wealth of the Sinner is laid up for the Juſt."

Sermon

SERMON CCXIII.

On the ſame Subject.

Excuſes for it obviated.

Exod. xx. 15. "Thou ſhalt not ſteal."

Notwithſtanding the Sin and Danger of Theft and Diſhoneſty, there is yet One Caſe, (to mention no other at preſent,) wherein Men are apt to think themſelves very excuſable in the Meaſures they take; [viz] when they labour under any very preſſing Neceſſities, and want thoſe Supports of Life for themſelves and their Dependants, which their Neighbours may well be ſuppoſed able to ſpare out of their Abundance. (*)

As to this Caſe, Whatever Extremities People are under, it will by no Means juſtify a criminal Action. We muſt not do Evil upon any Pretence. "Thou ſhalt not go beyond or defraud thy Brother in ANY Matter." — "That which is altogether Right ſhalt thou do, ſaith the Lord." A

(*) *Furtivæ aquæ dulciores ſunt,*
"Stolen Waters are ſweet; and Bread, eaten in ſecret, is pleaſant. But he knoweth not that the Dead are there, and that her Gueſts are in the Depths of Hell."

A firm Faith and true Honeſty, are not to be forced by Neceſſity, nor corrupted by Reward.

A good Intention will not juſtify an evil Action, neither will a good Action ever juſtify an evil Intention; Both muſt be good, or Neither will be accepted; much leſs where the Intention is itſelf evil.

The wiſe Diſpoſer of all things, who hath brought Men under theſe Circumſtances, is able, when he pleaſes, to relieve them; he can do it by a great many ſecret Methods of his Providence, tho' they are not able to diſcover them; and if they live in his true Faith and Fear, if they commit themſelves unto him in "well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator," they may comfortably hope, from the Goodneſs of his Providence, that he will do it.

To encourage them in ſuch an Hope, there are innumerable Texts in Scripture; I ſhall here only mention two of them: "Caſt thy Burthen upon the Lord, (ſaith holy David,) and He ſhall ſuſtain thee."

To the ſame Effect is That comfortable Advice of the Prophet Iſaiah; "Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, who obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, and hath no Light," (i.e) hath no viſible Means or Proſpect of deliverance, "let him truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God, and he will abundantly ſupply him."

"Diſtruſt

"Diſtruſt not the Fear of the Lord, then, when thou art poor: and come not unto him with a double Heart."

To take any thing from another, only becauſe we think we want it, or becauſe we have Power to take it, and will have it, without any Right to it, is the higheſt Pretence to Dominion, and is the Denial of our natural Equality; it is pretending a Right to diſturb the Happineſs of others, and is to deny Property among Men, contrary to Truth.

Add to this, the Proviſion which the Laws of the Land have made for all the truly Neceſſitous.

As Neceſſity, then, will not juſtify any Theft whatever, — ſo will no other Excuſes avail us in the Caſe. (*)

I ſhall conclude with briefly laying before you the Folly of Theft in general, and the Danger and ill Conſequences of it in particular; together with a few Rules, as Means whereby to avoid it. — And,

First,

(*) Demoſthenes, *ad Furem inquientem*, neſciebam quod tuum hoc eſſet: *et* tuum non eſſe ſatis ſciebas, *reſpondit*. *Igitur*, *ut Occaſio non furem faciat*; claude Oſtium, obde Seram, aperi Oculos, atque intendes ſi *negligis*, *teipſum culpa*. *Rarò Fur Intentis obfuit*. *Cavendo tutus*. "Sure-keeping is good, where an evil Wife is; and ſhut up where many Hands are." — See Knox's Eſſays, No. 128 *On ſome of the falſe Pretenſions and Impoſitions of the Artful and Avaricious.*

Firſt, This Vice is committed through a miſtaken Value of things.

What can we put in Competition with the Peace of our own Minds, with a good Name, and the Fame of a good Report? "The Price of it is above the Price of the Gold of Ophir, and the richeſt Ointments are not to be compared unto it;" much more is it above the Value of Riches, ill-gotten by Vanity.

Will Riches, unjuſtly acquired, balance the Loſs of a good Conſcience, and inward Peace and Serenity? (*)

Will any of the things of this World make amends for the Loſs of Bliſs eternal, and Happineſs unſpeakable? and yet, ſo is every One that purloineth from his Neighbour the things which are not his. (‡)

In a Word, — There is Nothing worth ſtealing, (†) for Truth and Honour, Honeſty and Innocence, are in Value above all things. But

(*) Moral Evil can no more be committed, than Natural Evil can be ſuffered without Anguiſh and Diſquiet: What ever doth Violence to the plain Dictates of our Reaſon concerning Virtue and Vice, Duty and Sin, will as certainly diſcompoſe and afflict our Thoughts, as a Wound will raiſe a Smart in the Fleſh that receives it. Good & Evil, whether Natural or Moral, are but other Words for Pleaſure and Pain, Delight & Uneaſineſs. There is no need of Arguments, to evince this Truth: the univerſal Experience and Feeling of Mankind bears Witneſs to it. (‡) See Note (*) Page 209, &c.

(†) The old Academicks laid it down for a Principle, that When

Profit

But further: — The Folly of Theft is yet further apparent, in that it is devoid of its End, being to be reſtored; (*) If this is not in our Power, then Reſtitution muſt be made another Way, by an adequate, ample, and ſatisfactory Compenſation; it not being enough to confeſs the Sin to God, and beg his Pardon; but Reſtitution of the thing, or Recompence for it, with the Damage ſuſtained, muſt alſo be made and rendered: without which, Pardon and Remiſſion of the Guilt from God can never be expected. For, without Reſtitution, there can be no Repentance, (‡) he

Profit and Juſtice come to a Competition, the Latter ſhould always carry it. But This did not ſatisfy Tully; He has ſtated the Caſe higher, & determined, that "Every thing that was Honeſt, was for a Man's Intereſt, & that nothing unjuſt could poſſibly be ſerviceable."

Riches, well gotten, are not altogether to be contemned: but he that grows Rich at the Coſt of his Honeſty, loſes more than he imagines. Small Profit comes from ungodly Gains. Nothing is profitable that is diſhoneſt. *Lucrum Fraude partum, Damnum eſt, non Lucrum qui enim aliquid Furto acquirit, perdit Fidem.* — "The Treaſures of Wickedneſs profiteth not, but Righteouſneſs delivereth from Death."

(*) "If a Thief be found, he ſhall reſtore ſeven-fold, he ſhall give all the Subſtance of his Houſe."

(‡) The like will hold in almoſt all other Caſes of Offence. True Sorrow for Sin, & real Purpoſes of Amendment for the Time to come, is not, in all Caſes, ſufficient. If we have in any Way wronged or injured our Neighbours, we muſt make him all the Reparation we are able. Thoſe whom we have drawn into Sin, by our Example,

he who wrongs another, and doth not to the utmoſt of his

or Neglect of Duty towards them, we muſt endeavour, by all we can, to contribute to their Recovery; - If we have injured their Good Names and Character, we muſt acknowledge our Faults, and vindicate their Reputations, and by all juſt & becoming Ways repair their Credit; - If, beſides ſmaller Theſts, we have wronged them in their Eſtates, either by Fraud or Force, Falſe-witneſs, or the like; we muſt make Reſtitution; (i.e) reſtore to the right Owner what we unjuſtly poſſeſs, or to his Heirs; or, when neither can be diſcovered, to the Poor; & that too, with all thoſe Meaſures and Circumſtances, which, upon Conſideration, we ſhall find to be our Duty. Without this Fruit of Repentance, all other Expreſſions of it will ſtand us in no Stead, ſince our Obligation hereto is founded upon the immutable Reaſon & Juſtice, of "doing to others, as we would they ſhould do unto us."

The Objections hereto are briefly, — Firſt, that Men are aſhamed to do it. — To which it is anſwered, that it is not Matter of Shame, but of Praiſe and Commendation. But, it may be ſaid, it is Matter of Shame to have injured; and that this is the Way to lay open our Shame. Indeed, If the Injury be publick, the Reſtitution ought to be ſo too, as the only Way to take off the Shame of the Injury. For, our Reſtitution doth not here, in this Caſe, publiſh our Shame, but our Honeſty. But, if the Injury was private, we may preſerve our Credit by concealing ourſelves: - and if we do the Thing effectually, we may be as prudent, as to the Manner of doing it, as we pleaſe.

Another Objection is the Prejudice it will be to Men's Eſtates. But, to this we anſwer, that it is more for their Intereſt to make Reſtitution, than to continue in the Sin. For, (as our Bleſſed Saviour reaſons in another Caſe,) "It is profitable for thee, that One of thy Members ſhould periſh, than that thy whole Body ſhould be caſt into Hell:" ſo likewiſe here, It is profitable for thee, that thou ſhouldſt go poor to Heaven; than to Hell, laden with the Spoil and Guilt of Rapine and Injuſtice. The

his Power make amends, cannot be supposed but still to approve the Fact, and he who approves can never be said to repent. — Indeed,

Every Man who is guilty herein contracts a new and fresh Guilt on all the Occasions he has of making

The last Question, is, Disability to make Restitution. This is, indeed, something: for, where Nothing is to be had, every Man must lose his Right. But then, we must remember, that, in this Case, there must be a hearty Repentance for the Sin; and our Sorrow must be so much greater, by how much our Ability to make Restitution is less; and, there must be a willing Mind, a firm Purpose and Resolution of doing it, when God shall enable us, and diligent Endeavours to that Purpose. Under the Law, those who were not able to make Restitution, were sold for six Years, if their Service did not make Reparation in less Time. It is true, indeed, the Moderation of the Gospel doth not suffer Christians to deal so hardly with one another; but, if the Gospel remit of this Rigour, and does not allow Christians to challenge it, yet we should voluntarily do that in Effect, which they were forced to, (i.e) use our best Endeavours and Diligence to put ourselves into a Condition of making Satisfaction; And we should not look upon any thing beyond the necessary Conveniencies of Life, as our own, till we have done it; unless the Party injured will recede from his Right, in Whole or in Part. For, though the Impossibility of the thing discharges us for the present, yet the Obligation still lies upon us to do it, as soon as we are able.

The chief Use of this Doctrine of Restitution should be to prevent us from being injurious to any One, and to take away the Occasion, and to free ourselves from the Temptation of not performing so difficult a Duty; it being much easier not to oppress our Neighbour, than after having done it, to make Satisfaction.

ing Reparations for the Wrongs done by him. His detaining what belongs to another Person does not destroy That Person's Right to it. So that every Moment he has it in Possession, and may restore it, he does, in Effect, approve and repeat the first Injury; he continues in, and carries on the Injustice: — which therefore, without Restitution is not to be considered so much as One SINGLE Sin, as the first Link of a continued Chain of Sins combined together.

So that, above all other Sins, there is this peculiar in the Vice before us, that it is directly inconsistent, especially where Persons are not under necessitous Circumstances, with the very Thoughts and Designs of Repentance. The Prophet Ezekial therefore, makes it an express Condition of Forgiveness; "If the Wicked restore the Pledge, and give again that he hath robbed, then he shall surely live, he shall not die."

So that to think of raising Wealth by Fraud, and then growing honest, is the greatest Folly imaginable; for till we have returned, or offered to return, as far as we can, all that we have got by our Fraud, we are not honest. While so important a Part of Repentance is wanting, to demonstrate the Sincerity of the rest, we cannot hope to be accepted with God.

But perhaps some will say, what if those we have defrauded

defrauded are dead, how can Reſtitution be then made them? To which we anſwer, in ſuch Caſe we are bound to make Satisfaction to their Children or Repreſentatives; and if there are none to be found, then we ought to diſpoſe of it in Acts of Charity and Piety. Some poſſibly may think this a hard Leſſon of Inſtruction; yet This is the Rule of Chriſtianity, the inflexible Laws of Juſtice, and without complying therewith, we can have no reaſonable Hopes of obtaining God's Pardon. — But further,

Deliberate or contrived Fraud, is in itſelf a Crime of the deepeſt Malignity, and of the moſt pernicious Conſequences: A Sin which tends to deſtroy all human Society, all Truth and Confidence among Men, all Juſtice and Equity, which is the Support of the World, and without which no Society of Mankind can ſubſiſt. And the breaking through this Obligation by deliberate Fraud, is, of all other Sins, one of the moſt open Defiance of Conſcience, and the moſt wilful Oppoſition to right Reaſon, that can be imagined: A Sin, for which a Man can find no Excuſe, nor Extenuation in his own Mind; into the Commiſſion of which, he can be led by no Error, by no wrong Judgment, by no miſtaken Opinion whatſoever; but he muſt of Neceſſity, at leaſt for That Time, have abandoned all true Senſe of Religion;

and depend entirely upon the Fact's not being diſcovered, for the Concealment of his Shame. Then, for a CHRISTIAN: a Man that profeſſes a pure, and more Holy Religion; a Religion that commands not only common Juſtice and Equity, but ſingular Love and Good-will towards our Neighbour; and requires not only Abſtinence from the Unjuſt Things of the World, but alſo a Contempt and Indifference even for its innocent Enjoyment; for a Man who profeſſes ſuch a Religion, to be guilty of a contrived and deliberate Fraud, which the Conſcience even of a good HEATHEN would abhor; this is a greater Aggravation of the Crime.

I ſurely need not lay before you the ſhocking Crimes, and the various malignant Attendants wherewith it is too generally accompanied. Lying, Oppreſſion and Subornation are its almoſt never-failing Attendants, (*) and but too commonly, (as we have obſerved,) the Sin of deepeſt Die, Murder itſelf; and conſequently, (on the Offender's Part,) the almoſt ſure ending of a wretched and ſhameful Life, by a more ignominious and ſhameful Death. — But,

What further heightens the Danger of a Procedure herein,

(*) Men ſeldom commit one Sin to pleaſe, but they commit another to defend themſelves.

herein is, the natural Progress of this Sin to others of like Nature. (*) One Act of Fraud and Injustice naturally leads to another, and the Temptation is the stronger, the more we comply with it. (†)

It therefore especially concerns us, (if we would not involve ourselves in Sins of the deepest Die, and Number infinite,) sincerely to practise the Rules of universal Honesty; a sincere and conscientious Regard to which, being That alone which gives a secret Blessing upon all our Endeavours, and to whatever else we possess.

"The Blessing of the Lord maketh rich" to all the best Ends and Purposes of Life; and, if it should not raise us to a Distinction in this World, yet it hath this

(*) All the Sciences and Virtues are so nearly related, that it hath been held, No Person can be possessed absolutely of any One, without some Acquaintance with every Other; we cannot, then, be surprised to find the several Vices also, to which the Heart of Man is subject, contiguous, and like the Colours in the Rainbow, mingling imperceptibly with each other.

(†) *Sicut Polypus, quicquid Brachiis attigit, Radice sua attrahit ita Avaritiam ex Rebus in Homines quorundam, si quid nacti fuerint.*

It is dangerous to step aside out of the Path of Innocence and Virtue, upon any Presumption of being able to recover ourselves, and get into it again. *Interni quo Fata trahunt, nisi fistere detur.*

Successus improborum ad Improbos allicit.

"Bind not one Sin upon another, for in One thou shalt not be unpunished."

Serm. CCXIII.

this Advantage above the greateſt "Revenues without Right," [viz] that "it bringeth no Trouble therewith, and that the End of it will be bleſſed." (*) — Beſides,

Tho none of theſe greater Ill-conſequences ſhould attend us, as not being tempted to, or at leaſt guarding againſt great Offences; yet, being guilty only in Matters of leſſer Moment, how vilely ſhall we be accounted of? for, being once known to be guilty hereof, we ſhall always be deemed guilty of the ſame, if not, of greater Offences; (‡) and, conſequently, ſhall be avoided by all Men. (†) They

(*) *Ineſt ſua Gratia parvis.*

Melius eſt honeſtè pauperem eſſe, quàm turpiter divitem; Hoc enim Commiſerationem, Illud verò Reprehenſionem, adfert.

(‡) *Qui ſemèl furatur — Semper Fur vocatur.*

When Infamy hath mark'd a Race,
To them deſcends a long Diſgrace.
And tho, like harmleſs Sheep they feed,
Honeſt in Thought, in Word, and Deed,
The Change will never be believ'd.
"A loſt good Name is ne'er retriev'd."

(†) The uſual Bait of Injuſtice is Gain and Profit; This is the common Mark that Fraud and Oppreſſion aim at, tho' uſually they fall ſhort or fly beyond it, and, inſtead of enriching, do finally hurt and impoveriſh Men. It is indeed known, that unjuſt Dealing may ſometimes raiſe a Man's Fortune; but it is as well known, that in its natural Tendency it impairs and ruins it, becauſe, by dealing unjuſtly, he makes it every Man's Intereſt to forſake him. No One would know

They therefore, of whose Guilt the Law can take little or no Notice, must not think to escape without a heavy and bitter Self-condemnation, from Time to Time; nor usually the bad Opinion of the World: which last will frequently do them more Harm, than any unfair Practices will do them good. (*)

This especially holds with the MIDDLE and LOWER, which is by far the greater, Part of Mankind. Their Livelihood depends chiefly on their Character; and their Character depends on their Honesty. This will make amends for many other Defects, but nothing will make amends for the Want of this.

Deceitful Craft may seem perhaps a shorter Method of Gain, than Uprightness and Diligence; but, they who get wickedly, spend, for the most Part, foolishly, perhaps wickedly too: and so, all that stays with them is their Guilt. — Or,

Let them be ever so cunning, and appear to thrive ever so fast, yet let them remember the Saying of the Wise King: "An Inheritance may be gotten hastily

knowingly have to do with a Knave, that is always upon the Watch to cheat and deceive; with whom he can neither speak nor act securely, but must be always upon his Guard against him.

(*) *Ut sublato Fundamento perit Ædificium: Ita, si Fraude tollitur Fides; perit Commercium. Horret quisque adire Locum, ubi læsus est.*
Laus Piscatur sapit. Serm. CCXIII.

at the Beginning; but the End thereof ſhall not be bleſſed. Treaſures of Wickedneſs profit nothing: but Righteouſneſs delivereth from Death. Wealth gotten by Vanity ſhall be diminiſhed; but he that gathereth by Labour, ſhall increaſe." — Or,

Should the Proſperity of thoſe, who raiſe themſelves by ill Means, (as we have obſerved,) laſt as long as their Lives, yet their Lives may be cut ſhort: for, what the Prophet threatens, often comes to paſs, and is always to be feared: "He that getteth Riches, and not by Right, ſhall leave them in the midſt of his Days, and at his End be a Fool:" – for "behold the Righteous ſhall be recompenced in the Earth; much more the Wicked and the Sinner." — But,

Should his Days on Earth be extended to the utmoſt; yet "the Sinner, an hundred Years old, ſhall be accurſed;" for, "he ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God." "The Lord will be the Avenger of all ſuch."

"Caſt not an evil Eye, then, on the Goods of thy Neighbour; let whatever is his Property be ſacred from thy Touch."

As to the Rules, whereby to avoid Theft, they are briefly theſe; [viz] Before we proceed to any evil Action, let us reflect a little How we ſhould approve the like from others; and then, "Whatſoever we would

"not

"not, that others should do unto us, That we must in "no Way do to them," would be an excellent Means to prevent us herefrom; for, Honesty and Uprightness, is a Virtue immediately founded on this first practical Principle of all human Converse, which is the Sum and Epitome of all the Scriptures, "the Law and the Prophets." A Principle that carries such innate Light and clear Evidence in itself, that the very Heathens frequently inculcate it in their Writings as the primary Dictate of That Morality, which they taught.

This is a Maxim we assent to, not by any elaborate Instructions, Dint of Argument, or long Train of Consequences; but it masters our Understandings by its native Evidence, and springs up in us as an unpremeditated Resolve of Reason. Both God and Nature have set up this Standard in our Consciences; and usually there needs no other Judge of our Actions towards others, than by comparing them with what, in the like Cases, we would think just and fit to be done to us.

It may be, we are all partial to ourselves in our present Concerns; and whilst we only look that Way, we may possibly seek all Advantages to promote them, tho to another's Detriment. But Reason and Religion will teach us to put ourselves in their Stead, and

then to manage our Tranſactions with them, as we ſhould judge juſt & reaſonable, were we in their Condition; and therefore, when we deal with others, we ſhould firſt act to ourſelves both Parties; and when we have duly conſidered it in our Thoughts, let us then perform the ſame Duties to others, in our real Condition, as we judged to belong to them in That which we only imagined. For it is a never-failing Rule to direct our Practice, that what we judge due to us, were we in another's Condition, is certainly due to him in his own: and if we do not ſo act, we betray a great Degree of Selfiſhneſs and ſinful Partiality.

This is a Rule applicable to all Affairs; (*) and there is ſcarce any one Occurrence of a Man's Life but he may regulate himſelf according to it; and indeed, there ſcarce needs any other.

Whatſoever, then, we have to tranſact with another, though perhaps we might take ſuch Advantages of him, as poſſibly he might never know, or be able to redreſs; yet let us ſeriouſly aſk our Conſcience if we could be content, and think it honeſt and juſt, to be ſo uſed ourſelves; and if not, whatſoever the Temptation be, either of Gain, Pleaſure, or Profit, let us reject it with Scorn, as That which would make us violate the firſt Principle of common Honeſty among Men, and contradict the Laws both of Nature and Scripture.

(*) See Page 81.

War

Was this Rule more generally obſerved among Men, the World would not have Cauſe to complain of Rapine, Extortion, Oppreſſion, Fraud, and Injuſtice, as now it hath. The Rich would not grind the Face of the Poor, nor the Poor unjuſtly clamour againſt the Rich. Superiors would not tyrannize over their Inferiors, nor Inferiors murmur or rebel againſt their Superiors; but an equal Peace, and an uniform Juſtice, would overſpread the whole Earth; and "Righteouſneſs would run down our Streets as a Mighty Stream." And therefore let me once more recommend it, (for indeed it cannot be preſſed too often,) that we would frequently ſet this golden Rule before us, and do nothing to any other Perſon which, were we in his Capacity, we would think unjuſt to be done unto ourſelves: and whatſoever we would expect from others, as our due, were we in their Place, even That ought we to perform to them; or otherwiſe we muſt condemn ourſelves. This is a Dictate of Nature and right Reaſon; the Sum of "the Law and the Prophets." And all thoſe various Precepts that are given us in Scripture, for the Conduct of our Lives, are but as ſo many Lines that meet in this Centre. And if we apply it to each particular Command of the Second Table, we ſhall find them to be all founded on, and interpreted by this.

We are required to honour our Superiors, to abſtain from Murder, Adultery, Theft, falſe Accuſations, and coveting what belongs to another; and all This, according to the ſame Meaſures that we would have others perform theſe very Duties to us.

So that Self, which is the great Tempter to wrong and injure others, was it governed by this univerſal Maxim, would be the greateſt Patron of other Men's Rights and Properties. — Again,

Another Rule of great Service herein, is, to avoid Idleneſs, the Parent almoſt of every Diſorder: Seeing it is tho' Want that we ſteal, and that Idleneſs naturally begets Poverty; this, therefore, ſhould be carefully avoided.

Every Man ought to have a Calling, whereon he may comfortably ſubſiſt, and by his Labour and Induſtry, at leaſt provide Neceſſaries for himſelf and his Family; for, "He that provideth not for his Family, hath denied the Faith, and is worſe than an Infidel."

Some there are who live without a Calling, who conſume the Labour of others, to whom the greateſt Charity would be Correction; who only ſerve to devour miſplaced Alms, and defraud the truly Poor of their Relief. — Again,

Others there are who are neither ſerviceable to God nor their Country; who have nothing of true Worth in

in them, being the moſt unprofitable Members of the Common-wealth, and only live to kill and deſtroy one another in their Riots and Exceſs.

It is certain that thoſe whom God hath liberally endowed with his earthly Bleſſings have no Neceſſity for manual Employments and Labour; but yet they may within their own Sphere find Buſineſs enough to employ their Time and Thoughts, ſo as to render them the moſt beneficial, both to themſelves and to others, and, of Courſe, make them to be loved and honoured; for, by their Authority and Example, by the Largeneſs of their Income and Revenues, & the Dependance that others have on them, they might be as inſtrumental to promote Goodneſs & Virtue, as too often they are to countenance and encourage Vice. But,

As ſome have not Employment, ſo Others have an unlawful One, whoſe only Buſineſs it is to teach and inculcate Vice, and excite Men to it, encouraging Wickedneſs in others, and making uſe of all Allurements to entice unto Evil, recommending Wickedneſs firſt to the Fancy, and then to the Will and Affections.

There are others, who indeed have a lawful and honeſt Calling, but then they are negligent and ſlothful; which tends to Poverty. "Yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little Folding of the Hands to Sleep; ſo ſhall Poverty come as One that travelleth;" draw-

ing nearer by ſoft and ſilent Degrees. Poverty alſo tempts to Theft; "Give me not Poverty, (ſays Solomon,) leſt I be poor, and ſteal." And therefore this Command, which forbids Theft, muſt, by Conſequence, enjoin Labour & Induſtry in our lawful Callings, which do at leaſt naturally provide Neceſſaries; and he that hath Theſe, need not ſteal; indeed, Induſtry is of higher Effect; it not only provides Neceſſaries, but generally an Abundance.

This is an Inference from that Command of the Apoſtle in the Caſe before us: "Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more, but rather let him labour, working with Hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." It is the beſt Preſervative, that can be, from bad Company and bad Courſes. (*) It procures the Good-will and good Word of Mankind. — Again,

To Induſtry we muſt join Frugality: elſe All will be Labour in vain. For, unwiſe Expenſiveneſs will diſſipate whatever the utmoſt Diligence can acquire. But if Idleneſs be added to Extravagance, Ruin muſt quickly inſue. And if Intemperance and Exceſs go along with them, the Caſe is then come to its Extremity.

Every One therefore, who deſires to approve himſelf

(*) *Sicut Cibus ſit Labet ad Vitam, ſic Labor ad Probitatem.*

ſelf honeſt, ſhould be careful to live within Bounds, ſo as to have ſomething in Readineſs againſt the Time of Inability or unforſeen Events.

Whoever therefore ſpends upon himſelf, or throws away upon any other Perſon, or Thing, more than he can prudently afford, (whatever falſe Names of Praiſe, as Elegance, Generoſity, or Good-nature, may be given to this Inconſideration,) will be led, before he is aware, to diſtreſs himſelf; and be too probably driven at laſt to repair, as well as he can, by Wickedneſs, the Breaches which he hath made by Folly.

The laſt Rule I ſhall lay before you to this Purpoſe is, "that we be content with ſuch ~~ſuch~~ things as we have." (*) And certainly he that is not content with what God allows him, lies under a great Temptation, by fraudulent and unjuſt Courſes, to carve out his own Condition to himſelf, and invade the Rights and Properties of others.

Diſcontent and Covetouſneſs are the Beginnings and Root of all Injuſtice. He that thinks himſelf injured, becauſe he enjoys not ſo much as others, will be apt, either through Fraud or Violence, to increaſe his

(*) There are but Two things that can reaſonably deſerve the Care of a Wiſe Man: The firſt is the Study of Virtue, which makes him honeſt; The ſecond is the Uſe of Life, which makes him content. Serm. CCXIII.

his Subſtance by taking from his Neighbour. Let us therefore in Time check this repining Temper, and be ſatisfied with that Proviſion which God hath afforded us; and though it be not the moſt delicate, or ſumptuous, "yet having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content." Let us look upon all other things as ſuperfluous or indifferent; and not murmur though we ſhould never attain them; well-knowing, that a Little will ſuffice for the little Time of our Abode here on Earth.

Whatever is neceſſary to our Subſiſtence, God's Providence and Bleſſing on our Induſtry, together with the Proviſion made by the Laws of the Land in Behalf of the Needy, will amply ſupply us with; and we ought not to repine for not having what we do not abſolutely want. (*)

"Set your Affections then on things above, not on things on the Earth." — Could Men be brought to alter the Object of their Deſires, the Taſk of Reformation would be done at once; their Conduct would follow of itſelf the Change of their Affections, and there would be little Need for us to explain or inculcate any of the Commandments. Let but this Sentiment, the Deſire of Heavenly things, enter into the Heart, and

(*) *Gratia ſit habenda Naturæ beatæ, quòd ea quæ neceſſaria ſunt parabilia fecerit; quæ autem non parantur, minimè ſunt neceſſaria.*

and poſſeſs the Dominion THERE: and no Vice can ſtand before it. Every Irregular Appetite and Paſſion, Ambition, Envy, Avarice, Selfiſhneſs; all thoſe corrupt Affections, by which we are led to be injurious to each other, are conſumed in a Moment by this "Fire from Heaven." The very Root of Injuſtice, the Principle from which it ſprings, the Means by which it grows, the whole Matter by which it is ſupplied and nouriſhed, are burnt up and annihilated; and the Heart, impregnated with the Seeds of Grace, and Virtue, becomes that "Good Ground, which brings forth Fruit unto Perfection."

Sermon

SERMON CCXIV.

Againſt Coveting other Men's Goods, a general Inducement to Theft.

Exod. xx. 17. "Thou ſhalt not covet."

The Firſt important Buſineſs of Man, eſpecially of the Inſtructors of Men, in Order to preſerve or reclaim them from Vice, eſpecially from any Miſconduct to their Fellow-creatures, is, to cleanſe the Heart or Mind, from whence, (as our Saviour informs us,) "all Evil proceeds."

To this Purpoſe is the Command before us, "Thou ſhalt not covet."

The with-holding our Hands from Theft and Diſhoneſty, from Rapine and Injuſtice, is not the Whole that is required in the Obedience that is expected from us: for the Divine Law-giver, (in the Delivery of the Commandments,) after having forbidden all actual Tranſgreſſion, proceeds to impoſe Reſtraints upon the Mind; and prohibits, in the ſame Tone of Authority, the very inward Deſires of that which cannot juſtly become our own, as the more open and actual Violation itſelf.

We

We find no ſuch Injunction, (it is conceived,) in the Appointments, the Laws, and Inſtitutes of mere Men. Content with the Regulation of the external Act, and the Impoſition of ſome Reſtraint on the Tongue, they preſume not to proceed further; but decently and prudently ſtop, being arrived at the Extent of their Authority.

But the Supreme Lord has no Bounds ſet to his Empire; which both reaches throughout Infinity, and penetrates to the inmoſt Receſſes: his Dominion is univerſal, and complete. "He is above all, and thro all, and in us all." The Thoughts and Intents of the Heart, make indeed the principal Subject of his Inſpection and Government: to deſire, and wiſh only to be exempt from his Authority, is already to have rebelled againſt him. — Indeed,

He had need to be a Divine Law-giver, who takes upon him to impoſe ſuch Reſtraints upon the Mind; and controul ſuch Workings of the Soul, which are inviſible to Mortal Eye, and can be tried before no human Tribunal!

If we commit no Murder, but only deſire and wiſh to do it; if we do not ſteal with our Hands, but covet only in our Hearts, the Poſſeſſions of our Neighbours: what, (under the beſt inſtituted human Law,) is the Penalty of this Tranſgreſſion? or who ſhall under-

take to be the Witneſs? Would it not be ſuperflu-ous and trifling to iſſue out Proclamations that would be of no Force, and Edicts that could never be exe-cuted? For what is a Law without a Sanction? or what are both theſe, where there can be no Proof of the Offence? Would not this be rather to ſport with the Majeſty of Laws; and to debaſe and expoſe to Ridicule, what ought to be moſt important and ſa-cred? But the Dignity and Wiſdom of the great Law-giver to the Jews, forbid us to aſcribe to Him a Conduct ſo plainly inconſiſtent and unmeaning.

What then can we infer, but that he knew, his Laws had an Authority more than Human, that they only paſſed thro' his Hands; but were indeed enacted by One, who was alſo able to ſee them executed? Him, "who is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart;" and can "bring every Work into Judg-ment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Among the innumerably many and divine Precepts, therefore, and Commands given us in the ſacred Vo-lume, there is none which deſerves greater Regard than That contained in the Text: its Importance, however, is too ſeldom perceived by the Generality of Men. They are apt to conſider the Regulation of ex-ternal Conduct as the chief Object of Religion. If they

they can act their Part with Decency, and maintain a fair Character, they conceive their Duty to be fulfilled. What paſſes, in the main Time, within their Mind, they ſuppoſe to be of no great Conſequence, either to themſelves, or to the World.

In Oppoſition to this dangerous Plan of Morality is the Command before us, "Thou ſhalt not covet:" - The Deſign of which is to regulate the inward Thoughts and Deſires of the Heart, and to keep them from all unlawful Luſting or Coveting of what is another's.

The former Precepts expreſsly relate to the outward Man, reſtraining the external Acts of Violence and Injuſtice; but This extends to the inward Man, putting a Check to all ſecret unlawful Deſires, tho' they never come into Act, and refining the Heart, which is the Spring of all Evil, from all unjuſt Inclinations; for "out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Theſts, Falſe-witneſſes, Blaſphemies." Indeed, all the Laws of God are ſpiritual, for they reach and affect the Heart; and therefore our Saviour in expounding the Commandments declares, that all internal Motions to Sin are prohibited, as well as the outward Acts.

God, in this Commandment, expreſsly arraigns the Thoughts, and condemns the very Intention of our

Hearts, towards what is evil; "thou ſhalt not covet." He requires us not to deprive our Neighbour of his Right, nor even to wiſh or deſire it; and to abſtain, not only from all unjuſt Actions, but from all covetous Inclinations. — In ſpeaking to this Subject, I ſhall conſider,

First, The true and full Import of it.

II. The Sin and Danger of the Offence forbidden.

And then, III. The proper Means to preſerve us from it. — And,

First, Of the true and full Import of the Command itſelf; Which forbids the Sin of Covetouſneſs, (i.e) an immoderate Luſting after, or Deſiring what belongs to another.

There may be an honeſt and regular Deſire of others' Goods; when confined to juſt and lawful Means of obtaining it; ſince without This, there can be no Traffick or Commerce. None will buy or purchaſe any thing of another, unleſs he has a Mind thereto; Trade and Commerce depend on the Liking and Deſiring one another's Goods. But then, there are beſides irregular Deſires, whereby Men covet the Goods of others, and would unjuſtly obtain them; and ſuch are groſs Violations of this Commandment.

Some

Some things of our Neighbour's cannot lawfully be parted with; others not without great Loſs, Inconveniences, or Reluctancy; in ſuch Caſes, to deſire our Neighbour's Goods, is an evil Covetouſneſs.

If we want a Perſon, who poſſeſſes any thing in Truſt, or under certain Limitations, to give or ſell it in Breach of that Truſt, or thoſe Limitations. Or, if he can part with it, but is not willing; and we entertain Thoughts of acquiring it by Force, or Fraud, or being revenged on him for his Refuſal; this alſo is highly blameable: for why ſhould he not be left free Maſter, quietly, of his own; — Indeed, barely preſſing and importuning Men, contrary to their Intereſt, or even their Inclinations only, is in ſome Degree wrong; (‡) for it is one Way of extorting things from them; or (under) how-

because this ſhould not be, "for whom God hath joined together, let no Man put aſunder." No Conſent of Parties can diſſolve the Bonds of Wedlock, or violate the Laws of Chaſtity; and therefore all ſuch Deſires muſt be ſinful; for they being made One by mutual Agreement and God's Inſtitution, their Hearts muſt not ſtray from each other, nor others run towards them. To covet or withdraw the Affection of either is a manifeſt Breach of the Laws of God and Nature.

 Again,

(‡) *Verba mihi deſunt, eadem ſæpè roganti. Verbum Sapienti ſat eſt.*

Such Conceſſions as are extorted by Neceſſity, are always unſincere, and never laſting.

Hearts, towards what is evil; "thou ſhalt not covet." He requires us not to deprive our Neighbour of his Right, nor even to wiſh or deſire it; and to abſtain, not only from all unjuſt Actions, but from all covetous Inclinations. — In ſpeaking to this Subject, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt, The true and full Import of it.

II. The Sin and Danger of the Offence forbidden.

And then, III. The proper Means to preſerve us from it. — And,

Firſt, Of the true and full Import of the Command itſelf; Which forbids the Sin of Covetouſneſs, (i.e) an immoderate Luſting after, or Deſiring what belongs to another.

There may be an honeſt and regular Deſire of others' Goods, when confined to juſt and lawful Means of obtaining it; ſince without This, there can be no Traffick or Commerce. None will buy or purchaſe any thing of another, unleſs he has a Mind thereto; Trade and Commerce depend on the Liking and Deſiring one another's Goods. But then, there are beſides irregular Deſires, whereby Men covet the Goods of others, and would unjuſtly obtain them; and ſuch are groſs Violations of this Commandment.

Some

however, of giving them Trouble, where we have no Right to give it.

But the Particulars in the Commandment before us, reſpecting Cocupiſcence, will beſt ſet-forth the Nature of this Vice, and may therefore be very properly enlarged on, in Explication of the Command itſelf. As,

1ſt. We are forbidden, &c. ☞ (under)

1ſt. We are forbidden to covet our Neighbour's Houſe; (i.e) not only his Habitation, but whatever he is rightfully poſſeſſed of; theſe he ought quietly to enjoy, without any ſecret Wiſhes or Deſires of ours after them. It was Ahab's Sin to covet Naboth's Vineyard; and we ſhall be as guilty to covet our Neighbour's Houſe, or Eſtate, unleſs in an honeſt Way, when the Owner is willing legally to part with them, on Terms that are juſt and right. — Again,

We are forbidden to covet our Neighbour's Wife, becauſe this ſhould not be; "for whom God hath joined together, let no Man put aſunder." No Conſent of Parties can diſſolve the Bonds of Wedlock, or violate the Laws of Chaſtity; and therefore all ſuch Deſires muſt be ſinful; for they being made One by mutual Agreement and God's Inſtitution, their Hearts muſt not ſtray from each other, nor others run towards them. To covet or withdraw the Affection of either is a manifeſt Breach of the Laws of God and Nature.

Serm. CCXIV. Again,

(‡) *Verba mihi deſunt, eadem tam ſæpè roganti.*
Verbum Sapienti ſat eſt.

Such Conceſſions as are extorted by Neceſſity, are always unſincere, and never laſting.

Again, — We are forbidden to covet our Neighbour's Servant, whether Man or Maid; for theſe are Part of our Neighbour's Goods, made ſo by mutual Agreement; and by the Laws of God and Man, he hath a Right to their Labour and Service, which none may lawfully deſire or deprive him of. Indeed, a Maſter and Servant may lawfully part by Conſent, or he may remove an idle unfaithful Servant, and then they are free to any other; but none may ſecretly wiſh for, entice, or ſeduce Another's Servant, for This is a Breach of Juſtice and Charity, and creates Difference among Neighbours. This is to do to another what we ſhould not like to be done to us, and is very contrary to That Love and Kindneſs we ought to bear to one another.

Again, — We are forbidden to covet our Neighbour's Ox or Aſs; that is, any of his Cattle, Flock, or Herd. In theſe things our Neighbour has ſo juſt a Property as may not be invaded ſo much as by a Wiſh, for then it would poſſibly go further; Coveting will lead us to purloin and ſteal; for next to deſiring is defrauding: and therefore this Commandment checks the firſt Motions and Tendencies to ſuch Evil; for it cautions us not only againſt Theft and Robbery, in ſtealing our Neighbour's Cattle, but forbids all Deſires and Thoughts tending towards it. Indeed,

So far from coveting or hurting his Cattle, we are to

to ſave and ſuccour them in all their Wanderings; for our Saviour commands, that if our Neighbour's Ox or Aſs fall into a Pit, we ſhould help him out, and if he goes aſtray, to bring him Home.

Laſtly, We are forbid to covet any thing that is our Neighbour's. The former Part of the Command relates to things of Weight & Conſequence; and that we might not think ourſelves at Liberty to deſire the ſmalleſt Matters belonging to our Neighbour, it is added, "nor any thing that is his." Some there are, who will own it unjuſt and unreaſonable to covet another's Houſe, Wife, Servant, or Cattle, and yet think leſſer Matters ſuch Trifles as not to be minded; and ſo are apt to indulge, not only their Hearts in coveting, but alſo their Hands in purloining of them. But this Commandment corrects all ſuch Miſtakes, by requiring us not to covet any thing that is our Neighbour's, he having an equal Right to ſmall as well as greater Matters; and he that violates God's Authority in the One will ſoon do it in the Other; for many, by uſing to ſteal little Trifles, have proceeded to things of greater Value; which ſhould make Men avoid the Beginnings of this Vice, and not to meddle with their Neighbour's Property in the loweſt Matters.

Having thus ſhewn the Sin forbidden in this Commandment, we ſhall proceed,

II. To ſhow the Sin and Danger of the Vice forbidden; which we ſhall do by obſerving the many Evils with which it is connected, and naturally produces them, and which are prohibited equally with the Sin itſelf. — As

Diſcontent with our preſent Condition, which occaſions Coveting; for he that likes not his own Circumſtances, will covet what he ſhould not; and thinking he hath not enough, will be ever uneaſy and deſirous of more. Diſcontent deprives Men of the Comfort of what they enjoy: Ahab could take no Pleaſure in the Glory and Greatneſs of a Kingdom whilſt he coveted Naboth's Vineyard; for he came "to his Houſe heavy and diſpleaſed, he laid him down on his Bed, turned away his Face, and would eat no Bread." This Folly leads Men to Fraud and Injuſtice. The Apoſtle declares, that they who being uneaſy at their preſent Fortunes and covet to be rich, "fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts that drown them in Deſtruction and Perdition." Diſcontent with our Condition, ſays the Wiſe Man, "frets the Heart againſt the Lord," as if he dealt hardly with them, and denied to give what they deſired or deſerved. It makes them find Fault with the Diſpenſations of divine Providence, as thinking other Men's Lot better than theirs;

and which leads first to coveting, and then purloining what is another's. — Again,

Envy is another Sin forbidden in this Commandment, as an Occasion of this Evil Concupiscence. This is an Effect of the former, and naturally leads to Covetousness: For he that is discontented with his own Condition, will envy others; and That naturally begets inordinate Desires and Coveting after it.

This Sin offers great Indignity to God, for it will not allow him to dispose of his own Blessings. The envious Person would have things ordered, not by the Wisdom of the divine Will, but according to his own Fancy and Humour: he would be the sole Carver of his own and other's Fortunes, and therefore murmurs if any have more than he thinks proper; which is a great Affront to the Wisdom and Authority of our Maker. It is also high Injustice to our Neighbour to covet what is his, and repine at his Prosperity, when we ought to rejoice thereat: nor is it a small Injury to a Man's self, for it destroys the Peace and Tranquillity of his Mind, and deprives him of all the Comfort he might reap from the Prosperity of others; this envious coveting of another's Property, serving only to fret and gall his Mind, to weaken his Body, to bring Leanness into his Soul, and Rottenness into his Bones. — Again,

Another Occaſion of Coveting, here forbidden, is, an immoderate Care and anxious Solicitude for the Things of this Life; for which Reaſon our Saviour gives a ſtrict Caution againſt it; "take no Thought for your Life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye ſhall put on: Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment?" Not that our Saviour here condemns all prudent moderate Care about earthly things, nor requires us to caſt-off all Thoughts and Concern for our Body; we being commanded to "provide things honeſt in the Sight of all Men, and not to be ſlothful, but diligent in our Buſineſs." But our Saviour's Charge is, not to give way to any anxious, perplexing, or ſolicitous Cares about theſe things; ſuch as to diſtruſt God's Providence, or to put Men upon inordinate Deſires and Endeavours after what is not their own; for theſe deſtroy Property, diſturb the Peace and Order of the World, violate the Laws of God, and bring Deſtruction to the Souls of Men; and therefore our Saviour uſes many Arguments, whereby to cure ſuch anxious and immoderate Cares.

He ſends us to the Fowls of the Air, and the Beaſts of the Field, "who ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns, and yet our Heavenly Father feedeth them; and are we not much better than they?"

To

To check all ſolicitous Thoughts about Meat and Drink, he minds us of the Proviſion made for all inferior Creatures; how he "feeds the Ravens," and will not ſuffer a "Sparrow to fall to the Ground;" and can we think he will be forgetful of his own Children? To cure all anxious Cares about Raiment, he ſends us to the Lilies of the Field, to "conſider how they grow, they toil not, neither do they ſpin; and yet, ſays he, Solomon in all his Glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe: and if God ſo clothe the Graſs of the Field, that to-day is, and to-morrow is caſt into the Oven, ſhall he not much more clothe us?" And laſtly,

He ſhews the Vanity of all ſuch diſtruſtful Cares, which can neither add "one Cubit to our Stature," nor one Grain to our Eſtate without God's Bleſſing; which will ſooner be obtained by a devout Dependance on his Providence, than by all the anxious and indirect Arts of our own Contrivance. Theſe, together with Idleneſs and Pride, are the principal Motives and Occaſions of that ſinful Concupiſcence condemned in this Commandment, and which ſufficiently manifeſt, (what, under this Particular, we have intended,) namely, the Sinfulneſs, & Danger of this Vice; which therefore, with the Vice itſelf, we muſt carefully guard againſt and avoid, as the Enemies of our Souls, and the Obſtacles of our Salvation. In a Word, let

us ſubdue the firſt Motions of Diſcontent, Envy, and Ambition, which will otherwiſe betray us into greater Evils; for by ſuffering our Hearts to covet, we ſhall as naturally proceed to greater Lengths, and be guilty of the groſs Offence; and thereby incur the Miſeries and Puniſhments both of this Life and the next. But,

It may be ſaid, that This is only an Evil of the Mind, and if it extends not, in its Effects, to Men, is therefore of no great Conſequence to any. — But,

If we could grant this, (as we have proved the Reverſe,) yet it is no Plea before God; for even, (as Solomon obſerves,) "the Thought of Fooliſhneſs is Sin;" much more, when it originates from, and is naturally productive of, and attended with the evil Diſpoſitions and Effects, as already mentioned. For,

While the Bent of the Heart is turned towards Sin, and Men are under the Power of any vicious reigning Inclination, tho', out of any prudential Motives, they are reſtrained from the outward Act of Sin, the Guilt of it notwithſtanding will be charged upon their Conſciencies; for, in the Judgment of God, and indeed, in the very Reaſon of the thing, (when we conſider Ourſelves as free and moral Agents,) "THE MIND IS THE MAN:" and conſequently, when That entertains Sin, the Man is guilty of it, and becomes an Offender before God. For,

Virtue

Virtue and Vice, Religion and Irreligion do not conſiſt merely or principally in outward Acts, but in the Diſpoſition of the Mind, and a Man deſervedly procures the laſting Epithets of good or bad, as he appears either to be ſwayed by, or regardleſs of it. Independent of all Actions, it is, in Truth, the State of the Heart itſelf which forms our Character in the Sight of God. With our Fellow-creatures, Actions muſt hold the chief Rank, becauſe by Theſe only we can judge of one another; by theſe we affect each other's Welfare, and therefore to theſe alone the Regulation of Human Law extends. But in the Eye of That Supreme Being, to whom the Whole of our internal Frame is uncovered, Diſpoſitions hold the Place of Actions, and the moral State of the Mind is That which conſtitutes us good or evil in his Sight.

The Rectification of this, therefore, is the primary Object of religious Diſcipline; and in Proportion as this is more or leſs advanced, we are more or leſs religious. Accordingly, the Regeneration of the Heart is every where repreſented, in the Goſpel, as the moſt eſſential Requiſite in the Character of a Chriſtian. — Which brings me,

III. To the proper Means to preſerve us from this evil Vice, and to regulate us herein.

And firſt, — The firſt and chiefeſt Means hereto, is Contentment, according to the Advice of the Apoſtle, "Let your Converſation be without Covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have."

Contentment is ſuch a Satisfaction of Mind in any Condition, as to be eaſy to One's ſelf, and to others. True Contentment ſprings from the Mind; it ariſeth not from the Abundance of outward things, which often brings Diſquiet; but from the inward Frame and Diſpoſition of the Soul, that thankfully enjoys, and prudently acquieſces, in whatever Portion is allotted. Therefore St. Paul declares, that "he coveted no Man's Silver, or Gold, or Apparel, but had learned to be content with his own Eſtate." Indeed, with any Eſtate that ſhould happen to him; for he "knew how to be abaſed, as well as how to abound; both to be full and to be hungry, to abound, and to ſuffer Need."

Contentment is ſuch a Well-pleaſedneſs with our Condition, as to render us eaſy to ourſelves. "The good Man, (ſays Solomon,) is ſatisfied from himſelf." He hath ſuch a Spring of Joy and Peace from within, as keeps him from murmuring & repining, and makes him receive whatever God is pleaſed to allot him. And the good Effect of this Virtue not only renders him eaſy to himſelf, but to all others; for Contentment preſerves us from all the evil Effects of Envy, and

and makes us rather to rejoice than repine at another's Profperity.

But the Reaſonableneſs of this Virtue of Contentment will more plainly appear, if we conſider, that whatever our State and Condition may be, yet it is allotted by God, the Sovereign Diſpoſer of all things, from whoſe Bounty flows all that we receive. "The Earth is the Lord's, and the Fullneſs thereof," which he beſtows on the Sons of Men as he thinks fit. We are Debtors to him for our very Being; we are made by his Power, and daily ſupported by his Providence, for "in him we live, move, and have our Being;" ſo that we ought rather to be contented and thankful for what we have, than murmur and complain for what we want. And as we can claim nothing as our Due, neither can we challenge any thing as our Deſert; for we "are leſs than the leaſt of all God's Mercies," and can merit nothing at his Hands. We ſhould therefore be content, and receive with Gratitude what we have. — And,

If to the Sovereign Right and Title of Almighty God, we add the Conſideration of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, we ſhall ſee far greater Reaſon to be content with our Portion; for what we have is allotted us by an all-wiſe and gracious Hand, who knows what is better for us than we can do for ourſelves.

We often wiſh and long for thoſe things that will do us more Harm than Good. But God in his Wiſdom beſt knows what is proper and fit for us, and diſpenſeth his Goodneſs to us in ſuch Proportion, as moſt tends to promote our Welfare; and therefore we ought, in Point of Intereſt, as well as Conſcience, humbly & thankfully to acquieſce in what He orders: for to be diſſatisfied with our Condition, is, in Effect, to prefer our Judgment to his, and to think ourſelves wiſer than God. And to be diſpleaſed with his Allotment, is the ready Way to forfeit our Maker's Favour, and to provoke him to recall what we have, inſtead of giving more. Beſides,

There is a peculiar Happineſs attending Contentment; for a contented Mind is always eaſy: it creates a conſtant Calm, and undiſturbed Tranquility within; but Coveting, Diſcontent, and Envy diſquiet the Mind, and raiſe a perpetual Storm in the Hearts of Men. Content is true Happineſs, the bleſt Eſtate of Heaven, the Joy of glorified Saints, and of the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect; who are not only pleaſed with their own Joys and Bleſſedneſs; but are alſo delighted with thoſe of others. But Diſcontent and Envy are Paſſions and Torments of Hell, not only inflaming, but inflamed, and ſet on Fire by it.

But, In Order to acquire and attain this Virtue, to

to the Suppreſſion of Concupiſcence, we muſt conſider, that as this uſeful Virtue is ſeated chiefly in the Mind, ſo we muſt begin THERE, and endeavour to bring our Minds to our Condition.

The Reaſon why few attain this Art, is, becauſe they take not the right Method. Men are ſolicitous enough to bring their Eſtates up to their Minds, which, being too large to be ſatisfied with earthly things, is a vain Attempt; for "he that loveth Silver, ſhall not be ſatisfied with Silver; nor he that loveth Abundance, with Increaſe." But to act rightly, we muſt labour to bring our Minds to our Eſtate, and to reſt ſatisfied with whatever the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs allots for us, which better knows what is fit for us, than we can do for ourſelves. — Again,

In Order to be content with our Condition, we ſhould conſider that all earthly things are inſufficient to make us happy.

Some indeed weakly imagine, that if they could arrive to ſuch an Eſtate, or attain ſuch a Degree of Honour, Dignity or Preferment in this World, they ſhould then be ſo happy as to be ſatisfied without ſeeking or deſiring more; and yet when they have obtained their Wiſh, they find their Cares and Troubles greater, and themſelves more uneaſy than before.

Indeed, ſuch things will not ſatisfy us, for they rather

increaſe, than allay the Thirſt of the Soul. So that let the World flow ever ſo much upon us, our Deſires will run faſter, and exceed them. Wherefore, it will be our Wiſdom to fix our Affections on higher and better things. — Again,

To learn this Leſſon of Contentment, we muſt ſubdue all Pride and Haughtineſs of Mind, for he that is highly opinionated will think he hath not what he deſerves; This will make him repine, deſire more, and envy others: but he that hath humble Thoughts of himſelf, will be thankful and content with any thing.

We muſt alſo be diligently employed in that Buſineſs and Calling wherein God hath placed us, for that will ſecure his Bleſſing on our Endeavours, and bring us Content. "The Bleſſing of the Lord, (ſays Solomon,) maketh rich, and bringeth no Sorrow with it." He who hath This, is rich in any Condition, and doth not want a Competency.

It is Idleneſs that occaſions Want, covetous, and envious Thoughts, which Induſtry expels, and leaves no Room for.

We muſt alſo take Care to live within the Bounds of our Income; for he that exceeds it, will contract Debts that unavoidably lead to Danger & Diſcontent.

Frugality, Temperance, and Honeſty are excellent Helps to Contentment, there being a Bleſſing annexed

to

to theſe things which brings Peace to the Mind, and Proſperity to our Affairs; but Extravagancy and Diſhoneſty are ever attended with a Curſe, which diſquiets the Mind, diminiſhes the Subſtance, and lays a Foundation for Miſery and Trouble. — Again,

If we would get and preſerve a contented Mind, we muſt more obſerve thoſe who are below, than ſuch as are above us; for the Splendor of Greatneſs is apt to dazzle the Eye, to create Envy and Diſcontent.

He that too much admires the Wealth, Honour, and Power of another, will be eaſily induced to envy their Happineſs, and be diſcontented with his own Condition; but if he looks below him, and conſiders how many want what he enjoys, This will teach him to be content and thankful for his own Allotment.

Nature is content with a little: he that lives by the Neceſſities of Nature is eaſily ſupplied; but he that is of a carnal & ſenſual Appetite, multiplies his Wants, and makes artificial Neceſſities, which baniſh Contentment.

Laſtly, To acquire the Grace of Contentment, we muſt learn to fix our Truſt and Dependence on God, who hath promiſed never to leave nor forſake us. He alone is able to ſatisfy the Cravings of our Souls, and to ſupply the Wants and Neceſſities of Nature. All other things leave us when we moſt need them;

they are of no Uſe in Time of Sickneſs, the Hour of Death, or Day of Judgement; and therefore, let us not "truſt in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy." (*)

(*) See the Diſcourſe on Contentment, Vol. xi. Page 219, &c.

Sermon

SERMON CCXV.

The Sin and Danger of incurring Debts, without Intent or Proſpect of Payment.

Rom. xiii. 8. "Owe no Man any thing, but to "love one another."

The Apoſtle, having in the foregoing Verſe, enjoined us to render to every One their Dues – "Tribute to whom Tribute, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, Honour to whom Honour;" ſubjoins as an Enforcement of the ſame Precept in other Terms, – "Owe no Man any thing." He firſt expreſſeth the Precept poſitively; "Render to every One their Dues;" and then, to enforce it yet ſtronger, he varies the Phraſe, and lays down the ſame Precept a ſecond Time, in negative Terms, – "Owe no Man any thing — Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another;" (i.e) diſcharge every Engagement, every Obligation you are under, to every Man, in every Relation of Life; take Care you owe no Man any thing but Love and Good-will; for That is a Debt, which, tho you always pay, yet you will always owe: It is an Obligation that never ends but with Life.

The

The Precept here delivered is general, and extends to every Inſtance of ſocial Virtue; but the Deſign of this Diſcourſe ſhall be to apply it to One particular Duty, which is as little practiſed, and perhaps leſs taught, than any; (viz) the Duty "of Paying Debts;" a Duty of as great Conſequence to the Well-being of Society, as any other whatſoever; as comprehending under it one great and important Branch of commutative Juſtice; and yet as utterly and as openly diſregarded, as if neither the Laws of God, nor Man, nor Nature exacted it of us. And therefore, to awaken Men unto a right Senſe of this Duty, I ſhall conſider the Evils that attend the Neglect of it, both as they regard the Debtor, and the Creditor.

And, firſt, — With Regard to the Debtor. Nothing is more manifeſt than that Careleſſneſs in contracting Debts, and Negligence in diſcharging them, is One of the moſt unhappy Characters in Life, and ſuch as draws more Evils after it, than can well be counted or conceived. This, as it is the Effect, ſo it is the Cauſe of all Extravagance. Money borrowed is ſo much clear Gains to a thoughtleſs Man, that has nothing but the Gratification of his Pleaſure, at Heart; and with how much more Eaſe, and leſs Interruption, this may be done, the better. The Conſequences

ſequences of ſuch a Conduct are Reflections, which can only proceed from That Wiſdom which they openly deſpiſe, or are utterly incapable of. This, of Neceſſity gives them up a Prey to the Artifices of wily Uſurers that lie in wait to deceive; for there are Thoſe in the World whoſe whole Buſineſs it is to watch and to feed the Follies of ſuch Extravagants: they give according to wiſe Huſbandmen, who commit their Seed to the Earth, in Proſpect of a good Harveſt, greater or leſs, according to the Richneſs of the Soil. They well know that the Perſons they deal with are bad Computers, and worſe Accomptants; and therefore nothing is more eaſy than to impoſe upon them in the Value of what they vend, or the Quantity of what they receive. And if they ſhould at any Time but ſuſpect themſelves defrauded, the Men of the World know very well how to bring them again to their own Terms: they manage them as ſkilful Warriors ſubdue ſtrong Towns; they ſtarve them into a Compliance: they know it is but holding their Hand, and refuſing to feed their Extravagance, to make them ſubſcribe to any Conditions they think fit to impoſe.

How far do theſe Men out-do the Folly of Eſau! He ſold his Birth-right to gratify a real Want, and yet he ſinned in ſelling it; but theſe Men ſacrifice

their's to ſuch Wants as are falſe and fantaſtic; to Appetites that will not be ſatisfied, or at leaſt ought not to be indulged: indeed, they oftentimes ſacrifice their Health, as well as their Inheritance, even to Wantonneſs and Fulneſs. Wine and Women, Play and Pleaſure, are craving, waſting, and inſatiable; and whoever ſuffers them to faſten on him is effectually undone.

If Men contracted Debts for the Neceſſaries of Life, which they could no otherwiſe procure, they were excuſable; but to purchaſe needleſs, perhaps pernicious Vanities, at the Hazard of Health, & Fortune, & Liberty; at the Hazard of every thing that is good and valuable in Life, is Folly paſt Forgiveneſs. And yet, if it were only a Folly, it might be born with. But, in Truth, this Habit of thoughtleſsly running into Debt, draws many other worſe Habits after it; Lying, Swearing, Cheating, and all Kinds of Vice and Villany are its ſure Attendants; indeed, ſometimes even Murder itſelf, and an open Defiance of public Juſtice. It is like that Evil Spirit, in the Goſpel, who, when he hath gotten Poſſeſſion, taketh with him ſeven other Spirits more wicked than himſelf; & they enter in, and dwell there; "and the laſt End of that Man is worſe than the firſt."

A Spirit of Extravagance, long indulged, cannot bear

bear to be reſtrained or refuſed; and if it may not be gratified in the uſual Way, yet gratified it muſt be, at any Rate. If Credit be checked in the common Courſe, new Channels muſt be cut, and new Sources opened; and This muſt be the Work of Falſehood and Fraud, and every wicked Artifice that can be deviſed. By this Means the Mind becomes corrupt and depraved to the laſt Degree, and the Man is gradually fitted for the Converſation of Villains. Indeed, this Sin is as ſtupid with Regard to This World as other Sins are with Regard to the next; it ſacrifices all the ſolid and laſting Satisfactions even of this Life, to ſmall, preſent, momentary Gratifications, without the leaſt Thought of the dreadful Conſequences that await them; and it ends, even in this World, as other Vices do in the next, in the Loſs of Liberty and Happineſs; where in their Confinement they will be furrounded with nothing but Sin and Affliction; where abandoned Wretches become yet more abandoned by Society and Example; by the Converſation of Miſcreants more vile than themſelves; by mixing with the moſt corrupt and profligate Part of Mankind; inflaming their paſt Guilt by new and greater Enormities every Day; living in utter Defiance of God and Goodneſs; and, for the moſt Part, dying either in a hardened Im-

penitence, or in the Horrors of Deſpair. And yet this is the End to which the young, the gay, and pleaſurable Part of Mankind are hurrying on, with as much Eagerneſs, as if they thought it impoſſible ever to attain it too ſoon. — And, indeed,

If this were only the Purſuit of youthful Folly, the Evil were, in ſome Degree, to be endured, becauſe Age and Experience would be ſure to abate it; but, in Truth, it is often the Vice of every Age, and every Condition in Life — wherever Pride and Vanity reign, there extravagant Aims are purſued, and fantaſtic Diſtinctions ſought after, at the Hazard of every Felicity and Security in Life. Turn your Eyes upon the World, and you will behold the Generality of Mankind living apparently above their Fortune; And! What is living above their Fortune? but living to ſure Deſtruction, both of themſelves and Family, as well as all thoſe they deal with? for the Inſtances are not few or rare, of Perſons utterly undone by living beyond their Fortune. In this Condition, abandoned at once by their Friends, and by the Fund or Income by which they ſubſiſted, deſerted by every thing but their Pride, whither ſhall the unhappy Wretches turn themſelves? Their Vanity ſets them above all honeſt Induſtry in a low Way; for that, for the moſt part, remains with them, and

and hath this Alternative, it either urges them to ſtarve in an honourable Way, or drives them to violent and deſperate Courſes for Subſiſtence, till they end in Infamy. And, although ſuch a Creature is little to be pitied upon his own Account, yet is his Fall often to be lamented, on Account of many others that are involved in his Ruin.

An honeſt Friend, that was drawn in to be bound for him, is undone by his Beneficence, (*) or an innocent Family that were too young to be Partners in his Folly, and yet muſt ſhare his Fate, are given up by it to Proſtitution or Poverty; or an honeſt and kind Parent, who expended more than he could well afford, to bring Children with more Advantage into the World; perhaps, too, a virtuous and a valuable Woman, innocent of his Pride, & yet cruſhed in his Fall; though, it is to be hoped, this rarely happens, the Wife being too often the great Incentive to the Huſband's Vanity; and, of Conſequence, leſs to be lamented in the Ruin in which ſhe is involved. Theſe, and a thouſand ſuch like Calamities, are the neceſſary and unavoidable Conſequences of Profuſion and Extravagance; of Careleſſneſs in contracting Debts, and Negligence in diſcharging them; theſe are the Evils which thoughtleſs Men draw upon their own

(*) See Page 16.

own Heads, and thoſe of their neareſt Friends, by Vanity and Negligence. And yet, great and various as theſe are, they are few and inconſiderable, in Compariſon of thoſe brought upon the reſt of Mankind by this evil Habit.

Every One knows that the whole Buſineſs of Trade, by which Nations grow great and happy, is carried on by Men of Diligence and Induſtry, of Fortunes, for the moſt Part, too ſmall, (at leaſt, at their firſt ſetting out,) to ſuppurt them in Indolence; & that their Profit is principally from quick Returns.

It is plain, from hence, that running in Debt with Tradeſmen, and neglecting to pay them in due Time, is utterly ruinous to the whole Buſineſs of Trade and Commerce, and abſolutely deſtructive of the very Principles upon which it is built, and by which it ſubſiſts; and yet this is a Crime every Day committed by Men of Fortune and Quality, with little or no Remorſe.

Indeed, it is ſcarce to be conceived how any Man can deal more Deſtruction and Ruin around him, than by deceiving and breaking-faith with the fair Trader; for it is well known, his Credit, his whole Subſiſtence, depends upon keeping his Word, and being ſtrictly punctual in his Payments and his Promiſes; and, if he fail in theſe, he is undone at once.

And

And how is it poſſible he ſhould not fail, if thoſe he deals with fail him? He hath no Way of raiſing Money but by Sale of his Goods; and, if thoſe to whom they are truſted will not pay him, it is impoſſible he can pay his Creditors; and, if he do not pay them, it is impoſſible but he muſt be ruined, and, perhaps, many more with him. For Traders are dependent of one another; and one Man's Fall is the Occaſion of many more with him, and ſo the Ruin becomes complicated, and extended beyond Imagination! inſomuch that the Failure of One Man here, may affect many others in the remoteſt Region, and, in Return, occaſion Ruin to ourſelves. And yet he, who thus "ſcattereth Firebrands, Arrows, and Death around him," will ſay, with great Compoſure to himſelf, and, perhaps, with great Applauſe from his Companions, "Am I not in Jeſt;" and pride himſelf in having impoſed upon the Credulity of the Induſtrious, (with the added Inſolence of a contemptuous Name,) and appointing Payment, perhaps, the next Day after his Flight or Failure.

And, after all, to what Purpoſe is all this Fraud, and Falſehood, and Deluſion! none in Nature, but to have wherewithal to feed their Folly and Extravagance; or perhaps, to pay Debts of Honour, as it is called, but, in Truth, Debts of Infamy! Debts, which

it was infamous to contract, & which it is villanous to pay, to the Injury of the honeſt Trader. A Sharper, that undoes you with Slight and Deceit, a Wretch, whom it is a Diſgrace to converſe, or ſo much as to be ſeen with, ſuch a Miſcreant ſhall be paid-off, tho' to your utter Ruin; every Engagement, every Security in Life, ſhall be ſacrificed to diſcharge him; whilſt the fair Dealer, that ſupplied you with the Neceſſaries of Life, is left in Miſery and Want, unſatisfied in his juſt Demands. Can any thing be conceived more monſtrous? or is it poſſible to imagine how human Nature can be ſunk into a greater Degree of Corruption than this? (*)

These are the Practices of the looſe and libertine Part of Mankind; and, indeed, what better can be expected from that vicious and thoughtleſs Extravagance in which they live? But there is alſo another Race of Men, oppoſite to theſe in all other Reſpects, who agree perfectly with them, in not paying their Debts, and yet are much more criminal on that Score; [viz] the needy and covetous Rich, who will not pay either becauſe they will hoard up, or purchaſe for Increaſe, or lend for Profit.

The thoughtleſs Libertine is a Man that ſpends more than he hath, and therefore cannot pay: the greedy Purchaſer is a Man that ſpends nothing, and hath

(*) see Page 12, &c.

hath a great deal, and will not pay, becauſe he would have more: theſe are the greateſt Monſters in Nature! a Compoſition of Covetouſneſs and Cruelty! who oppreſs and diſtreſs every one; who will pay no Man themſelves, and yet ſuffer no one to owe them any thing; "They drive away the Aſs of the Fatherleſs, and take the Widow's Ox for a Pledge; they cauſe the Naked to lodge without Clothing, and they have no Covering in the Cold; they are wet with the Showers of the Mountains, and embrace the Rock for Shelter; Men groan from out of the City, and the Soul of the wounded crieth out."

Theſe Men are the Peſt of Society; they rob oftentimes even under the Shew of Friendſhip, with Impunity, and without Remorſe: neither can you guard againſt them; neither can you bring them to Juſtice when you are injured. And here, the Condition of the Creditor is indeed deplorable; if he be importunate for his Dues, he is ſure to diſoblidge; if it be kept from him for a conſiderable Time, he muſt of Neceſſity be a great Loſer, becauſe he is deprived of the Advantage of turning it to Account, and in the main while loſes all the Uſe and Intereſt of it. (*)

Not

(*) It is to be preſumed that the Reaſon why the Law allows no Intereſt for Book-debts, is, becauſe the Trader cannot afford to let his Money lie out ſo long as to derive any Advantage from it by Way of

Not to add, beſides the exceſſive Expence of Law-ſuits, the Ill-will that ſuch an Attempt is ſure to draw upon the Tradeſman, is a Weight which few Men of That Rank are able to bear. The Man he goes to law with, and all his Freinds and Dependents, are ſure to become his Enemies from that Moment. The Debtor, in that Caſe, ſeems to think himſelf obliged to abuſe the Tradeſman, and blaſt his Credit as much as in him lies, to juſtify himſelf in uſing him ſo ill; and blaſting a Tradeſman's Credit is the ſure Way to ruin him at once: for Credit to him, like Honour to a Gentleman, is as dear as Life, and without which he cannot live: in depriving him therefore of this, we are in Effect, guilty of Murder; for being deprived of this, he muſt ſtarve; and, killing a Man at once is a much leſs Sin, than doing it painfully by Degrees. – Indeed.

In

Intereſt; for the Intereſt of Money is but a Trifle, in Compariſon of the Advantages it may turn to in Trade; and therefore the Law, to lay Tradeſmen under a Neceſſity of calling in their Money betimes, allows them no Intereſt for it whilſt it is out. But ſtill,

The Difficulty remains how to call it in, ſince every One knows that the Expence of a Law-ſuit may very eaſily exceed the Debt; and ſo, at beſt, they muſt of Neceſſity be Loſers even by gaining their Cauſe.

If indeed the Law, at the ſame Time it prohibited Book-debts from bering Intereſt, had fixed ſome certain and eaſy Way of recovering thoſe Debts, Tradeſmen had been well dealt by; but to take away the Intereſt of their Debts, and the Principal, after ſome Years, and yet leave them no Method of doing themſelves Juſtice, but at the Hazard of their Ruin, hath the Appearance of great Hardſhip.

In this Caſe, You are as cruel to your own Honour, as you are to the Tradeſman's Credit and Life; for Honour is a ſtrict and nice Regard to every Virtue in Life; and more particularly to Truth and Juſtice. And therefore, a Man of Honour that is neither true nor honeſt, is a Contradiction in Terms; a Man that allows himſelf in any Degree of Fraud or Falſehood has actually degraded himſelf from his Dignity, and has no more Title to the Honour, than he has to the Eſtate he has forfeited. (*)

But, Suppoſe the Tradeſman's Reputation ſo well eſtabliſhed as to bear up againſt the Load of Calumny that is thrown upon him on theſe Occaſions; ſuppoſe him able to bear the double Load of Calumny and a Lawſuit: yet what will all this avail him? The Debtor, perhaps, is PRIVILEGED, or protected by thoſe that are ſo, and his Eſtate ſettled; and if neither of theſe will do, he bids Defiance to the very Execution of the Law; and you Attempt it at the Hazard of your Life. Theſe are the Difficulties that Men in Buſineſs are forced to ſtruggle with, and too often ſink under. And if, in the Number of theſe, ſome ſhould be ſo far touched with Compaſſion or Remorſe, as not only to diſcharge what they owe, but likewiſe to pay Intereſt for it, beyond the Obligation of the Law, yet this is no ſufficient Reparation, becauſe (as we have

(*) See note (†) Vol. 10. page 83.

have obſerved,) it is far from doing Juſtice for the Damage he has ſuffered in being kept out of it ſo long. So that, when you think you have made him ample Amends for detaining what was due to him, you have in Truth injured him.

Thus I have endeavoured to lay before you the ſeveral Evils that ariſe from running thoughtleſsly into Debt, and from delaying to pay it, when it is in our Power.

I ſhall now make ſome Application of what hath been ſaid. — And, firſt,

Let me aſk the thoughtleſs Spendthrift once again, what can be the Conſequence of his running in Debt with all the World, but utter Ruin both to himſelf and others? If the Perſons you deal with are honeſt and indigent, how can you anſwer it to your Humanity, to bring Miſery and Deſtruction upon the moſt pitiable and moſt deſerving Part of the Creation? to deſtroy thoſe by Extravagance, which even Cruelty and Tyranny, would be tender of?

What is worſt, and indeed inſufferable upon this Head, is, that thoſe who allow themſelves in this Conduct often paſs upon the World under the Character of GOOD-NATURED Men; and we ſhall often hear it ſaid of ſuch a One, that "He is no Body's Enemy but his own." But the real Truth is, that every vi-

cious

cious Man, whatever he may be in his Intentions, is, in Effect, an Enemy to the Society he lives in; and more particularly a vicious Good-nature is one of the worſt Characters in Life. It is kind only where it ought not; it is kind to every Vice & every Villany; it is indulgent to every thing but Honeſty and Innocence; and Theſe it is ſure to ſacrifice wherever it comes. A goodnatured Villain will furfeit a Sot, and gorge a Glutton, and feed the Animals of his Pleaſure, with that Food for which his Creditors may ſtarve in a Dungeon; and will be gay in the Spoils of the Widows and Orphans. — Therefore,

If you have any Pretence to Goodnature, pay your Debts; and, in ſo doing, clothe thoſe that are now in Want for your Finery, (*) — feed him that is ſtarving for the Bread you eat, the Dainties on which you "fared deliciouſly every Day." And, beſides the Good you will do to others by theſe Acts of Honeſty, you will do infinite Good to yourſelves by them; for, paying of Debts is, next to the Grace of God, the beſt Means to deliver you from a thouſand Temptations to Sin and Vanity.

Pay your Debts, and you will not have wherewithal to purchaſe coſtly Vanities, or pernicious Pleaſures;

(*) See Note (*) Vol. xi. Page 21, — with Page 49, ditto.

ſures. — Pay your Debts, and you will not have what to loſe to villanous Gameſters. — Pay your Debts, & you will not have wherewithal to feed ſuch Numbers of uſeleſs Animals, and Inſtruments of Vice. In a Word, — Pay your Debts, and you will of Neceſſity abſtain from many fleſhly Luſts that war againſt the Spirit, and bring you into Captivity to Sin," and cannot fail to end in your utter Deſtruction, both of Soul and Body.

On the other Hand, if the Men you deal with, and are indebted to, are rich and wily, conſider they ſupply your Extravagance with no other View but to undo you; as Men pour Water into an Engine, to draw more from it. Conſider, they could not afford to truſt you, if they did not propoſe to make exceſſive Gain by you; and if you think at all, think what it is to loſe a Fortune by Folly; to purchaſe ſuperfluous and pernicious Vanities, for a ſhort Seaſon, at the Hazard of wanting Neceſſaries for the tedious Remainder of a miſ-ſpent Life. Time, which ſweetens all other Afflictions, will perpetually ſharpen and inflame This. As the Gaiety and Giddineſs of Youth go off, the Wants of Age will become more ſharp, and more inconſolable, to the laſt Day of your Lives; and ſevere Reflection will double every Calamity that befals you. And therefore the Son of Sirach well

well adviſes, "Be not made a Beggar by banqueting upon borrowing; for thou ſhalt lie in wait for thy own Life." And again, the ſame Wiſe Man moſt excellently obſerves, "That he that buildeth his Houſe with other Men's Money, is like one that gathereth himſelf Stones for the Tomb of his Burial:" he erects a ſure Monument, not only of his Folly, but of his Ruin; and the Conſequence is the ſame from Extravagance of every Kind; but with this Difference, that the Ruin derived from ſinful Pleaſures, is the moſt dreadful of all others; as it involves you at once in the double Diſtreſs of Diſeaſe and Want. Who amongſt you can at once bear the united Racks of Hunger, and Infection, and an evil Conſcience? and yet This is what you muſt feel, although it be what you cannot bear; the Torments of Hell anticipated! to be deprived of every Bleſſing, and to be immerſed in Miſery. — Thus much for the youthful Extravagant.

I ſhall now apply myſelf to the Man of Quality, that is guilty of this Vice, although theſe are too often the ſame Perſons. If ye will not conſider what ye owe your Creditors, and how to pay them, I beſeech you calmly to reflect and conſider what ye owe to Yourſelves, to your Family, to your Country, to your King. Was it for this that ye were diſtin-

guiſhed above others of the ſame Rank, only to be more eminent in Infamy? Was Nobility beſtowed upon your Anceſtors as a Reward of Virtue; and do ye uſe it only as a Privilege for Vice? Is ſuperior Worth degenerated into ſuperior Villany? If ye had any Remains of Modeſty, ye would renounce the Titles and the Fortunes of your Anceſtors, with the Virtues that attained them. Ye would bluſh to take place of a Beggar that had Virtue. Will ye yet pretend to be better Men than others, when ye have renounced your Humanity, when ye are no longer Men, but Monſters? It is not expected of you that you ſhould perform Acts of Heroiſm and Generoſity; that you ſhould reward Virtue, and ſupport Merit in Diſtreſs. Alas! theſe Expectations are long ſince vaniſhed, and ſeem only the Boaſts of fabulous Antiquity. But doubtleſs, it might ſtill be expected of you, that you ſhould do common Juſtice; that you ſhould not be worſe than the reſt of Mankind, becauſe you think yourſelves better; at leaſt expect to be called ſo, and treated as ſuch. Surely it might ſtill be expected of you that you ſhould pay your Debts, and keep your Promiſes; and, in Truth, ye would not be void, either of Dignity or Dependents, if ye did even this. Mankind are already too much prejudiced in your Favour, and would not fail to

pay

pay you ſufficient Regard and Reverence, even if you did them no Good, provided you did them no Hurt. But if ye expect to be eſteemed, not only without Generoſity, but even without Juſtice, ye are indeed unreaſonable, and will be ſure to be diſappointed.

Let me now apply myſelf to the Wealthy and Covetous. —And Theſe are, of all others, the moſt inexcuſable, in not paying their Debts.

Men that have made or improved their own Fortune by Induſtry, are utterly unpardonable in oppreſſing the Induſtry of others: the leaſt that might be expected from Increaſe of Wealth, is to do Juſtice with our Abundance.

This was the expreſs Direction of the Prophet Eliſha, when he had miraculouſly increaſed the Widow's Oil, he commanded her firſt to pay her Debts out of her Abundance, "Go (ſays he) ſell the Oil, and pay thy Debt, and live thou and thy Children on the reſt."

And the Reaſon of this is evident. The Money we owe is not ours, it is the Property of other Men, in our keeping; and we have no more Right to it, than we have to the Money in their Poſſeſſion. And altho' we ſhould make no Return to God for his Bleſſings upon our Induſtry, in Alms and Acts of Goodneſs, ſurely the leaſt we can do, is to do Juſtice to Men. What a dreadful Reflection is it to turn the Bleſſings

of Providence into a Curſe to ourſelves, and to all with whom we have to deal! "Woe unto him, (ſaith the Prophet Jeremiah,) that buildeth his Houſe by Unrighteouſneſs, & his Chambers by Wrong!" "Woe unto them, (ſaith Iſaiah,) that join Houſe to Houſe, that lay Field to Field, till there be no Place, that they may be placed alone in the midſt of the Earth!" living in that Character of Cruelty which is beſt ſuited to a Beaſt of Prey, that ſcatters Ruin and Deſolation all around him. One would think the Apoſtle's Precepts were reverſed to theſe Men; and that they thought themſelves bound in Conſcience to owe every Man every thing in the World, except Love and Good-will. — And,

After all, to what Purpoſe is all this Oppreſſion, and Iniquity of Avarice? To heap-up ill-got Riches for a Curſe upon themſelves and their Poſterity, and leave a Memory and a Carcaſe equally odious and offenſive behind them. "They are exalted for a little While," (as it is finely expreſſed in Job;) "They are exalted for a little While, but are gone, and brought low: they are taken out of the Way as all other; and cut off, as the Tops of the Ears of Corn." They are permitted by the Divine Providence, to fill up at once the Meaſure of their Wealth and their Iniquity; and, as ſoon as ever they are ripe for Ruin, they

are

are cut off in the Fulneſs of their Pride and Fortune; and the Wealth they have hoarded is like the full Ears of Corn, which, inſtead of being gathered into the Barn, is trampled under Foot, and ſcattered over the Face of the Earth; and ſo becomes a Prey to the Wicked and Prophane.

But, — As ſo much Injuſtice is oftentimes done to Tradeſmen, – do the Tradeſmen themſelves do no Injuſtice to others? – rather, How wicked is That Practice among too many of them, "of paying their Labourers in Goods, inſtead of full, and ready Pay?

We call this wicked; becauſe, if theſe Goods are rated at a fair Price, yet the Labourer is plainly defrauded, ſince he hath no Allowance for the Time and Trouble he muſt take, and the Hazard he muſt run in vending thoſe Goods. And,

Whereas he had a Right to immediate Pay for his Labour, his Neceſſities now oblige him to ſell thoſe Goods at any Price he can get, to the Diſcredit of Trade in general, & the real Injury of that very Perſon who laid him under a Neceſſity of ſo doing, who muſt of Neceſſity ſuffer by having his Goods ſold at an Under-rate. So that this Practice is as ill-judged and weak with Regard to his own Intereſt, as it is wicked with Regard to the Labourer.

And indeed, all bad Payment to thoſe they have to

deal with, eſpecially the poorer Sort, is manifeſtly injurious to Men in Buſineſs; for the Clamour of bad Pay, and the Diſcredit that neceſſarily attends it, generally ſpeaking, begins there.

Although the Men you deal with, do not know your Wants, nor conſider your Labour and Loſs of Time in ſeeking your Due, and are conſequently regardleſs of you and your Neceſſities; yet you well know the Wants of thoſe you deal with, and the Injury you do them in making them loſe their Time in attending upon you; and therefore you are utterly inexcuſable in not relieving them from thoſe Hardſhips, when you can do ſo, barely by doing Juſtice. How can you expect a Bleſſing from God upon your own Endeavours, when you are guilty of ſo much Cruelty and Injuſtice to others; when you are guilty of ſo much Injuſtice to the very Men by whoſe Labour you are ſupported? — "A poor Man, that oppreſſeth the poor, (ſaith Solomon,) is like a ſweeping Rain which leaveth no Food." Nature hath formed us to compaſſionate the Calamities we endure; and therefore a poor Man ſhould as naturally expect Aid and Conſolation from his Brethren in the ſame Condition. Conſequently, when, inſtead of being aided, he is oppreſſed by his Brethren, and the little Remains of his Subſiſtance are torn from him, he is

then

then ruined by the very Means appointed by Providence to ſupport him; and all the Means and Hopes of a future Harveſt ſwept away with its beſt Mould.

"A poor Man that oppreſſeth the Poor," is the cruelest Monſter upon Earth, and therefore it is, that God threatneth that "with what Meaſure you mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again." - "He that doth Wrong, (ſaith the Apoſtle,) ſhall receive for the Wrong which he hath done; - as he hath done, it ſhall be done unto him; his Reward ſhall return upon his own Head."

- "Owe no Man any thing, then, but to love one another" (i.e) fulfil all the Duties, which Love obliges you to, "for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law." (*)

(*) See Knox's Eſſays, No. 98. On the Guilt of incurring Debts, without either a Proſpect or an Intention of Payment.

Sermon

SERMON CCXVI.

On Honesty,
the Opposite of Theft, Dishonesty, &c.

Rom. xiii. 13. "Walk honestly, as in the Day."

The many beautiful Similies, whereby the Duties of Christianity are in Scripture represented to us, are, what must throw exceeding Light upon all its Injunctions, in this Manner laid before us.

The Brightness of the Day, Light, and Clearness, are what manifest every Work of Man, just as Darkness is the Cover of all Impurity and Injustice.

"Walk honestly, as in the Day."

If there be a Subject to which all Mankind will lend a willing Ear, it may be presumed to be That which is now offered to our Consideration.

There would be no Advantage or Satisfaction in the superior Scenes and Stations of Life, if the Continuance of them was not secured to them by the Honesty required of the rest of Mankind, by the Obligations in this Respect laid on the Conscience, as well as on the Conduct of others. Neither

Neither would there be a proper Encouragement to thoſe, who have only their own Labour to rely on, to make Proviſion for theſe things if there was no Security for the Fruits of their Induſtry, if after all their Endeavours there was no Right to Property, or no competent Authority to enforce That Right.

It is the Notion of Juſtice & Honeſty which gives Pleaſure to Plenty, and Hope to Neceſſity, & quickens all the delightful and uſeful Exerciſes of Mankind. It cuts off Temptation, prevents Deſpair, and particularly obviates all the uſual Occaſions of Self-deceit.

In perſonal Exceſſes Men ſometimes offend without Fore-ſight or Intention, or even without Conſciouſneſs of the Offence at the Time they are under the Influence of it: but we can ſcarce violate the Obligations of Honeſty without being ſenſible, at the ſame Time, of ſuch Violation, and being ſenſible likewiſe that we are doing amiſs in it. He who knowingly becomes guilty of it, would (if poſſible) conceal his Guilt from the Knowledge of the World; and, if he ſucceeds in that Point, yet cannot conceal it from himſelf, nor eſcape the Accuſation and Reproach of a ſelf-condemning Conſcience.

"He that doth Evil, hateth the Light; neither cometh to the Light, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reproved: but every One that doth that which is lawful & right

cometh to the Light, that his Deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought in God."

The Mind of Man bears ſo neceſſary a Teſtimony to the Cauſe of Juſtice, that himſelf will wiſh that he could relieve his Neceſſities and promote his Intereſt as well without deviating from the Rules of it; and would chuſe if he could do it with equal Succeſs to ſerve his Deſigns by honeſt rather than by diſhoneſt Methods. So far does natural Conſcience concur with the Dictate of Revelation, and both conſpire to render the Contemplation of this Subject acceptable, whoſe Exerciſe and Influence can only make Life itſelf pleaſurable and profitable.

So that to "walk honeſtly, as in the Day," is ſo to act, that all our Deeds may bear the ſtricteſt Light and Examination, and the moſt ſevere Scrutiny of Men; that no private, ſiniſter Dealings be ever attributed to us; but that, (according to the holy Commandment,) we "do That which is altogether right, that we may live and inherit the Land, which the Lord our God hath given us." — "Walk honeſtly, as in the Day."

In my further Proſecution of this Subject I ſhall obſerve the following Order:

Firſt, I ſhall explain the Nature and Extent of the Virtue before us.

II.

II. The Obligation and Importance of it.

III. The great Advantages we may reaſonably expect from a due Diſcharge of it.

Concluding with a few Obſervations naturally reſulting from the Whole. — And,

Firſt, The due Characters of Juſtice or Honeſty are to give every Man his own, and not to injure another. (*)

The former relates more immediately to Commerce, and to the Intercourſe of Men in their ordinary Dealings, and comprehends all thoſe Duties which reſult from their Wants, their Neceſſities, and Claims from each other. The latter is ſtill more extenſive; and, by prohibiting all Injuſtice, relates to almoſt every Action of Man. — But,

As Juſtice and Honeſty are Terms which every One knows as well as any Definition can explain them, I ſhall, therefore, but briefly touch upon ſome of the principal Inſtances of it, and the ſeveral Vices moſt oppoſite to it. — And here,

Juſtice and Honeſty are concerned in the Obſervance of thoſe Laws, whether of God or Man, which reſpect the Rights of Men, and their mutual Commerce

(*) *Juſtitia nihil alienum vendicat, dat cuilibet quod ſuum eſt, et communem Æquitatem ſuo præponit Commodo. Prædas abjurat iniquas.* Serm. CCXVI.

merce and Intecourſe with one another; indeed, the Obſervance of Laws, and Obedience to them, is a Debt which every Man owes to human Society; that we uſe Honeſty and Integrity in all our Dealings, in Oppoſition to Fraud and Deceit; – that we exerciſe Truth and Fidelity, in Oppoſition to Falſhood and Breach of Truſt; – that we preſerve Equity and a good Conſcience, in Oppoſition to all Kind of Oppreſſion and Exaction; – that we defraud and oppreſs not; – that we be as good as our Word, and perform all our Promiſes and Contracts.

In a Word, — To define a Man who is rightly honeſt, is to ſpeak of One who looks not to what he might do, but to what he ſhould. Juſtice is his firſt Guide; and the ſecond Law of his Actions, is Expedience. He had rather complain, than offend; and hates Offence more for the Indignity of it than the Danger. All his Dealings are fair; he diſcovers the Faults of what he would ſell; reſtores the overſeen Gain of a falſe Reckoning; and eſteems a Bribe venemous, tho it comes gilded over with the Colour of Gratuſity. His Cheeks are never ſtained with the Bluſhes of Recantation; nor does his Tongue faulter to make good a Lye, with the ſecret Gloſſes of a double or reſerved Meaning: He is the faithful Client of Truth, hates Falſehood, and fails not

where any Truſt is repoſed in him: — In a Word, — If there were no Heaven, yet would he be virtuous notwithſtanding. — But,

II. Of the Obligation of the Virtue before us; which is deducible from every Conſideration from whence any Notion to Duty can be drawn.

The Notion itſelf implies a ſuperior Being, to whom Duty is owing; but his Will, from whence alone we can ſtrictly deduce Obligation, is made known to us in diverſe Manners, and the Evidences of it may be conſidered as ariſing from Nature, Reaſon, and Revelation.

The Evidences of it from Nature are ſo ſtrong and preſſing, that all Mankind have been ſenſible of it.

Howmuch ſoever they have varied in the Notion of Rights, the Degrees of Power, and the Limits of Property and Prerogative; yet ſome Diſtinctions of this Kind they have univerſally admitted, & required each other to act by ſuch Rules of Diſtinction. Now,

Universal Conſent is an Argument of great Weight, wherever it can be truly alledged; and it is to be alledged with leſs Exception in this Inſtance, than in any other whatſoever.

The Grounds of this general Argument are likewiſe as readily aſſignable. Nature has made & ſent us into the World with ſo many Wants, Frailties and

Infirmities, that we cannot possibly subsist independently, but Society is necessary to the Being, and Well-being of Mankind: and, That the Distinctions of Property are necessary to the Nature and Support of Society, is rather a Matterof Fact, than of Argument.

Indeed, If the Voice of Nature speaks so loudly in Favour of this, if Property be as necessary as the Peace and Prosperity of Mankind, then the Necessity of each Person's bearing a due Regard to the Preservation of it, is equally evident; and Justice or Honesty is an indispensible Duty even by the Light and Law of Nature. (*) — But further,

Reason improves this our natural Capacity, and therefore rises higher in the Argument, being considered in this Case distinct from Nature, and as exalting both our Notions and Practice. Nature, indeed, leads

(*) *Vivitur ex Rapto, non Hospes ab Hospite tutus.*

Nullum Scelus Furto gravius, quippè Hominibus in Societate conjunctis, quid salvum esset, si furari liceret? Si hæc Affectio nobis insit, ut quisque propter suum Emolumentum spoliet aut violet alterum: si unusquisque raperet ad se Commoda aliorum, et detraheret quæ potest, Emolumenti sui Gratiâ, necesse est dirumpi Societatem humani Generis: Societas et Communitas Hominum everteretur.

Justice is the Cement of the World, all Societies stand upon this Basis; and therefore, Fraud and Violence are every where punished. *Ut Corpus sequitur Umbra; ità, Pœna Justitiæ Comes est. Ea Innocentia maximè probanda, quâ Homo non Metu Pœnæ est innocens, sed Amore Justitiæ.*

leads us, (as Beings of the ſame Species,) to aſſociate; but Reaſon leads us to the Contemplation of the Author of Nature, and to conſider this Aſſociation as his Law and Appointment. – The former regards merely the Convenience and Utility of mutual Honeſty; the latter reſpects the Fitneſs and Morality of ſuch Conduct. The former experiences the Neceſſity of it to our Subſiſtence, which is Foundation ſufficient for a Law to Nature; whereas the latter illuſtrates the Propriety of it in Intellectual Beings, who have Underſtanding to guide, as well as Senſe to move them; which therefore particularly diſtinguiſhes it as a Law of Reaſon. — In a Word,

The One conſiders merely the Happineſs, the Other regards the Holineſs of Mankind; – the One confines its Views entirely to the preſent State, the Other looks on This as the Appointment of Providence in the Paſſage to, and Preparation for, a better.

As this is a very diſtinct, ſo it is a very important Conſideration: – for, tho the Intereſts of this Life are not to be diſregarded, yet are they comparatively of leſs Weight, than thoſe which are to be ſecured or loſt for a whole Eternity. — And yet,

This relative View, even of temporal Rights, gives us an additional Value and a better Regard, when we look up to the Author of Nature, and conſider

these things as the Blessings of Providence, designed for the Support and Comfort of Man.

Here Reason exerts itself with a Kind of demonstrative Force, and there seems to be a Mixture of Intuition in the Argument.

The Capacity of the meanest is not so low, as to be beneath the Comprehension of this Duty; every One has so much Interest in understanding it, that it can scarce escape his Discernment, and needs not Argumentation to convince him of the Wrong.

This, indeed, is but the first Degree of Argument, it is a Light almost forcing itself on the Mind on the first Reflection, [viz] that what is a Wrong, if done by another to us, is as much a Wrong, if done by us to others: or, if the same Case be represented between other Men, with whom we have no Interest, the Mind without Hesitation declares against the Wrong, and natural Conscience conceives and expresses a Detestation of the dishonest Conduct. But,

If we rise one Step higher in the Argument, and look up to the Giver of Reason, the Author of all our Faculties and Enjoyments, the Light of this Duty will proportionally advance & receive a stronger Sanction. For, If Society be the Institution of God, (as may easily be proved,) the necessary Means of supporting it must be also of his Appointment, and every injurious

Violation

Violation of another's Right, whether by Force or Fraud, muſt be an Offence againſt the Supreme Lord of all, who deſigned and gives to every Man his juſt Rights. — But further,

The Idea of immutable Juſtice is another Proof of, and Argument hereto.

As Juſtice is one of the firſt Perfections which we conceive of, and aſcribe to the Supreme Being himſelf: the neareſt Imitation of God, therefore, in it, muſt be the higheſt Perfection of Man.

A juſt and righteous Diſpoſition muſt alſo be the Preparative for the Holineſs of a future State, where neither Force nor Fraud can enter, where Similitude of Temper only can give Reliſh to the Delights of the Place; and this Virtue, in particular, muſt be the Qualification for Comfort and Felicity in the Society of "the Spirits of JUST Men made perfect."

If from the Teſtimony of Reaſon, we proceed to That of Revelation, this is clear, full, and deciſive; the preceptive, doctrinal, and hiſtorical Parts of Scripture all concur to enjoin and enforce it.

From the Commencement of Property, the Security of it was required; — and therefore, of the Six Precepts, which the Jews tell us, were given to Adam, and renewed with an additional One to Noah, the

FIFTH prohibited Theft and Rapine, and the next provided, by the Appointment of Magiſtrates, for the Adminiſtration of Juſtice to thoſe who were not careful to obſerve it of themſelves.

Nor, does this depend merely on Tradition, but there are plain References to both in the Book of Job, who lived himſelf in the Patriarchal Age. He mentions, with Abhorrence, ſeveral Inſtances of Deceit & Violence, and ſpecifies ſome Particulars which he ſays were "Iniquities to be puniſhed by the Judges."

The Moſaick Law took particular Care to provide for This; and One of thoſe Moral Precepts, diſtinguiſhed by the particular Delivery of them by God himſelf, forbad (as we have ſeen) every injurious Violation of our Neighbour's Rights.

The Judicial Proceedings make a great Part of the Jewiſh Diſpenſation. The Complaints and Expoſtulations of the Prophets often relate to this Point, and the Violation of commutative, and the Miſapplication of diſtributive Juſtice are ſpecified as the Sins which were drawing down Vengeance upon them.

The Writings of One of their ſupreme Magiſtrates, (the Royal Precepts and Directions of Solomon) inculcate frequently & ſtrongly this Duty, and in ſome or other of the Paſſages, ſpecify all the publick and private,

private, the ſocial and perſonal Advantages of it.

The Goſpel has improved This, as it hath every other Inſtance of Morality. Our Bleſſed Lord's Direction of "doing as we would be done by," is both an Explanation and Enforcement of this Duty. Every particular Species of Injuſtice is ſeperately condemned, whether by Theft, Oppreſſion, Treſpaſs, or Deceit; and, it is particularly declared, that they who are unfaithful in worldly Concerns, "ſhall not be entruſted with the true Riches." It is repreſented as the principal Intent of the Goſpel to make Men "holy, juſt, and good," to confirm the Righteous, and reform the Diſhoneſt. Every Precept of Charity preſuppoſes and implies it, and the Tranſgreſſors of Juſtice, in their various Inſtances, are never omitted in the Catalogue of thoſe to whom future Vengeance is denounced. Nor are they left, by the Evangelical Doctrine, to reverſionary Terrors, but preſent Diſcipline and Correction is provided for them. Indeed,

It ought not to be omitted, that the peculiar Doctrines of Chriſtianity have an immediate Aſpect to, and Influence on this Virtue. The great Encouragements propoſed to Integrity and Honeſty, make the Violation of it more criminal; and the ſevere Threatnings render ſuch Violation the more terrible. The Example and the Sacrifice, the Life and Death

of our Saviour, do concur to raiſe our Regard for this Duty.

It is too low an Obſervation that he was punctual in the Diſcharge of COMMUTATIVE Juſtice; he worked Miracles that he might fulfil the utmoſt that DISTRIBUTIVE Juſtice required of him, and choſe rather by Omnipotence to over-rule the Laws of Nature, than to diſregard or omit any Appointment of the Laws of his Nation, or to ſeem wanting in Obedience and Reſpect to the Governors and Rulers of the People. — But,

The Intent of his Paſſion, (as repreſented in Scripture,) in plain, full, and repeated Expreſſions, does yet give us a more awful and elevated Idea of Juſtice. God Almighty, in his infinite Wiſdom, either could not, or would not, (which amounts much to the ſame thing,) remit the Tranſgreſſion of Mankind without ſome Atonement or Satisfaction to the Honour of his violated Laws. To this End the Son of God took Humanity on him, that in the ſame Nature, in which the Offence was committed, it might be diſcharged; and paid the Price of our Redemption by the Effuſion of his own ineſtimable Blood. "Him therefore God hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation thro Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteouſneſs," (i.e) to teſtify the Strictneſs and Immutability of the Divine

Juſtice

Juſtice by this Method, "for the Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt thro the Forbearance of God." — And!

What an exalted Notion does this Faith give us of That Divine Attribute, and how ſtrongly does it enforce the Imitation of it? — For, if this was the only Method, by which even infinite Mercy thought fit to admit penitent Tranſgreſſors to Pardon and Favour, we may well ſay with the Apoſtle, "what then ſhall the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel of God? And, if the Righteous," thoſe who are recovered to the Paths of Integrity and Honeſty, "be ſcarcely ſaved" - where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner," (i.e) thoſe who perſevere in Sin and Immorality, "appear," or fly for Refuge? — But,

III. I am to lay before you the great Advantages which we may reaſonably expect from a due Obſervance of the Command before us. — And here,

It is plain, from what hath been already ſaid, that the Welfare of Both Worlds depends upon it. It is the Condition of our Salvation both ſecular and ſpiritual, and neceſſary to our Proſperity temporal and eternal.

It is, indeed, ſo capital a Virtue, that the Scripture frequently mentions it as the Sum and Subſtance of all others, and ſpeaks of the Juſt and Righteous Man,

as of him that fulfills all moral & religious Duties. (*)

What is at first said of Noah is afterwards often expressed or implied of other good Men, that "he was just and perfect in his Generation." This is their Character as including the Whole of Morality, to which Praise is ascribed, and Acceptance promised; and when Rewards are proposed to other good Qualities, it is thus remarkably & emphatically expressed, that "They shall be recompenced at the Resurrection of the Just," as if a happy Resurrection was their peculiar and distinguished Privilege. In Truth,

The rightly performing this Duty, is litterally fulfilling the whole Law. The strictly just Man has cut off all the usual Temptations, and even the Disposition to every Species of Wickedness. All personal Excesses and Immoralities have a close Relation to injurious and dishonest Practices, and lead Men sometimes designedly, sometimes involuntarily, to violate the Rights of their Neighbours. A chast and temperate Conduct, an humble and benevolent Temper are our only Preservative from encroaching on the Privileges and Properties of others; and therefore an unexceptionable Character in This Point is ever a strong Presumption of Innocence in all others. It

(*) *Justitia Mater et Nutrix habetur caterarum Virtutum; nàm sine illâ neque temperans, neque prudens, neque fortis ullus esse potest. Ut Sol inter Sidera; sic, inter Virtutes Justitia principem sibi Lucem vendicat; in se se Virtutes continet omnes.*

It is an immoderate Love of this World, and a ſelfiſh unſocial Diſpoſition, which tempts Men in the various Inſtances to appropriate the Rights of others to themſelves, and where there is Piety & Reſolution ſufficient to reſtrain and correct This, there the other Temptations to the Violation of Duty will be the leſs likely to prevail. — But further,

It not only preſerves us from the Practice of Evil, but is productive of Good; and that, both with Reſpect to this, and a better World.

It is proverbially ſaid, that "Honeſty is the beſt Policy," and doubtleſs it is moſt generally found to be true. (*) — For,

Thoſe Vices which pretend to be of Advantage to us, when clearly inſpected, and all Circumſtances duly conſidered, will be found to be quite otherwiſe; among theſe we may reckon that of Fraud & Diſhoneſty, which, if we look well into them, will be found either not to bring the Advantages they pretend to, or that the Inconveniencies which attend them are as great or greater than the Advantages they produce, or elſe that the Practice of the oppoſite Virtues would be of much greater Advantage to us. All this is really true in the Caſe before us, and from which Solomon

(*) *In omnibus ſit tibi Virtus Via Conductor.*
Serm. CCXVI.

Solomon draws this juſt and happy Concluſion, that "better is a Little which the Righteous hath, than great Revenues without right;" becauſe, though but a Little, yet it will be more durable, and there is no Trouble with it; and, beſides this, what Honour and Credit doth it derive to us, what Intereſt, what Peace and good Order to the World, and to every Member in particular in it! (*) It is ſuitable to that "Law of the Mind," which every Man feels in ſome Degree; and of Courſe raiſes a Complacency and Pleaſure reſulting from the Congruity and Conſiſtency of our Actions and Judgments. "It is a Joy to the Juſt to do Judgment." It creates a Delight which is natural and rational, and the Teſtimony of our Regard to it is Part of the Reward of it.

The Honeſt Man, whatever his Circumſtances be, cannot be contemptible; rather, how is he careſſed, though even in Poverty! and, "if in Poverty, how much more in Riches?" and is preferred before his unrighteous Neighbour; — He only is worthy of Eſteem, that knows what is juſt and honeſt, and dares to do it; that is Maſter of his own Paſſions, and ſcorns

(*) *Qui adipiſci veram Gloriam volunt, Juſtitiæ fungantur Officiis.*

Would you true Happineſs attain?
Let Honeſty your Paſſions reign
So live in Credit and Eſteem;
And a good Name, if luſt, redeem.

ſcorns to be a Slave to another's. Such an One, in the greateſt Poverty, is a far better Man, and merits more Reſpect than thoſe gay THINGS who owe all their Greatneſs and Reputation to their Rentals and Revenues. (*) And if, in this State, it hath ſo great a Renown, how much more truly reſplendent is it in higher Characters, and where there are ſo many more Opportunities of Deceit! — But further,

It forever procures the Goodwill & Regard of Men.

A ſtrictly honeſt Man is every Man's Friend, and therefore will be ſure, when he is known, to enjoy the

(*) "The *Younger* Brother the better Gentleman."

Tho this Proverb contradicts Their Notions, who think ſuch Perſons only the *beſt Gentleman*, who had the *largeſt Eſtates*; and it being the Cuſtom of *England* for the eldeſt Son to go away with all the *whole Patrimony*, it may to them ſeem a Paradox; but as it is grounded on a different Notion, ſo there have been, and are plentiful Inſtances to confirm the Truth of it; for while the *Elder Brother* of a Houſe, depending upon his Eſtate, is either indulged by *Parents*, or gives up himſelf to an *indolent* Humour, ſo that his Soul in his Body, like a Sword in the Scabbard, ruſts for Want of Uſe, thinks it ſufficient, if he have only the Accompliſhments of a *Fox-hunter*, or *Country Juſtice*; the *Younger Brother* being put to his Shifts, having no Inheritance to depend upon, by plying to his Studies hard at Home, and accompliſhing himſelf by Travels abroad, oftentimes either by *Arts* or *Arms*, raiſeth himſelf to a conſpicuous Pitch of Honour, & ſo becomes much the better Gentleman; for 'tis *Manners makes a Man*.

We ſhould not diſdain an Inferior, tho' poor, ſince he may be our Superior in Wiſdom, and in the noble Endowments of the Mind.

the Friendship of all. He will never want Employment in his Profession, whatever it be, and will be the first to be admitted to Places of Trust, which are usually the most beneficial; whilst the dishonest Person is avoided of all who know him; and long unknown he surely cannot be, whilst his Frauds and Deceits are so many; and People's Concern for their real Interests so particular.

So that, whereas the unjust Man, by his Dishonesty, falls into Contempt and Poverty; the upright and honest Man, by his Uprightness, gains Honour and Wealth. (*) — But further, Another

(*) *Vir spectatæ Fidei. Hunc mandes, si quid rectè curatum velis.* Honesty is always the nearest Way to Success. *Probitas laudatur et alget.* — Justice in dealing is so necessary to Men's thriving in the World, that even they who are not honest, are fain to seem so.

But for a Man to seem to be honest, is in no Way so secure as to be really so; for, if he be not, the Event of things will unmask and set him out. For no Man can be secure of Privacy in an unjust Action. Let him carry it on ever so artfully, one Accident or other will draw the Curtain, and bring to Light the Fraud and Villany behind it.

So that, how much soever a Man may gain by a present Fraud, he is sure, if he be discovered, to be a Loser at the last. — Injustice is as great an Error in Politicks as in Morals, and bespeaks a Man to have as little Wit as Honesty.

The Sum, therefore, is briefly this: He that in the whole Course of his Life acts sincerely and justly, with a continual Respect to the Reason of things, and to the Law of God; that carries on all his Undertakings by fair and equitable Means, avoiding all Frauds and Deceits, all base and unworthy Actions; This Man takes the wisest and the

Another Advantage accruing herefrom is, that "againſt this there is no Law."

It guards Men againſt the Vengeance of the Magiſtrate, and from all the fearful Penalties annexed to the Diſturbers of the publick Peace. It prevents the ſhameful, painful, & diſtreſsful Lives and Deaths, which they bring on themſelves who incur the Cenſure of the Law, who, by violating the Rights of others, become obnoxious to all the Terrors wiſely appointed to ſuch Tranſgreſſors — And ſurely,

If any thing can excite us to the Practice of theſe things, it muſt be This, [viz] that we are hereby ſecure from all Danger whatever. Indeed, This is the moſt likely Courſe we can take for our preſent Eaſe and Security, as having, (in its own Nature, and by the Bleſſing of God,) a direct Tendency to free us from all Evils, and to make us as ſecurely Happy as this our preſent State is capable of. — And,

Is not This a very great and diſtinguiſhing Privilege, which honeſt and upright Men have above the Unjuſt,

and ſureſt Courſe to ſucceed in all his Deſigns, reſpecting either his preſent or his future Happineſs. — *Tanti refert Honeſta agere!*

Expers Fraudis, Gratiâ beatus. — Fidei ſpectatæ coronat.

A Prince's a Feather, a Chief's a Rod;

An honeſt Man's the nobleſt Work of God.

See Knox's Eſſays, No 66. On the Value of an Honeſt Man.

Unjuſt and Wicked, whoſe Ways are continually beſet with Dangers, and lead to interminable Miſery?

If ſuch Men ſuffer Harm, it is but natural, their Words and their Works do inceſſantly call it to them; and it is the juſt Recompence of their Deſerts.

But, — "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of That which is good?" If good Men ſuffer, and are injured, it is unnatural; for every One muſt do them this Juſtice, that they have Claim and Tittle to all due Reſpect, and benevolent Treatment.

Honeſty and Uprightneſs, whenever it is truly embraced and practiſed, have a natural and direct Tendency to our Security and Peace; indeed, the honeſt Man, though not always the richeſt, is yet ever the ſafeſt: — Whilſt we "follow after Righteouſneſs," we at the ſame Time "purſue the things which make for our Peace."

Tho' therefore, we live in the midſt of a wicked World, yet we have no Reaſon to be afraid of their Terrors, ſince our Virtues are our Security, our Lives being ſuch, as do not only not provoke Injuries, but directly tend to avert them; for "ſo is the Will of God, that with well-doing we ſhould put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men."

Tho'

Tho' our Adherence, therefore, to Honeſty and Uprightneſs ſhould not advance us to a Diſtinction in this Life, yet it hath This Advantage above the greateſt Revenues without Right, that "it bringeth no Trouble with it, and the End thereof will be bleſſed;" and, under the greateſt Afflictions, (for we are not always ſure of Succeſs, or of Freedom from Embarraſſments in this Life,) we ſhall be happy in the pleaſing Reflection of having done what is right. Conſcious of This, we ſhall be enabled to bear with Fortitude thoſe afflicting Trials which Virtue ſometimes ſuffers, and wait with Patience for That Reward which, tho' late, we know we muſt receive from the Diſpenſations of a gracious Providence; which neither Force nor Fraud can deprive us of; and which neither the Malice of ill Men, nor the Miſtakes of thoſe who are better diſpoſed, can poſſibly take from us. This is the Promiſe on which the Man of Integrity may ſecurely rely, whatever other Hopes or Privileges fail him. He has his God for his Friend, and Heaven for his Reward, whatever Diſcouragements may otherwiſe leſſen the Enforcements to the Diſcharge of his Duty.

"To do Juſtice and Judgment, (ſays Solomon,) is more acceptable to the Lord than Sacrifice." The Pſalmiſt is full of Expreſſions to this Purpoſe, declaring

declaring the Regard which the Creator pays to this Virtue in his Creatures: "The Righteous Lord loveth Righteouſneſs, his Countenance will behold the Upright." for "Righteouſneſs and Judgment are the Habitation of his Seat." — But,

The Doctrines of the New Teſtament are more applicable to us, if not more important in themſelves.

The Purport of this whole Revelation is, that "God hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs; and that he will then render to every Man according to his Deeds;" and that "the Righteous ſhall then ſhine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father." — Indeed,

The Scene itſelf of Happineſs, the very Manſions of Felicity are deſcribed as "the New Heavens, and the New Earth, wherein dwelleth RIGHTEOUSNESS;" and, (according to ſome Texts of Scripture, before cited,) a Bleſſed Reſurrection is ſpoken of as the peculiar Privilege of the JUST; — and the holy & happy Society of Heaven is repreſented as conſiſting of the "Spirits of Juſt Men, made perfect." — And?

Is not this glorious Proſpect a Bleſſing which no preſent Misfortunes can leſſen, or Enjoyments equal? Does it not enable the Man of Integrity to reap at all Times with double Satisfaction, the Fruits of his Integrity? Or, in ill Times, when theſe are defeated

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thro Error or by Design, to contemplate with Composure the End of his Labour, and Reward of his good Deeds? – Is not the Remembrance of an Almighty Benefactor, and an everlasting Felicity in Reversion sufficient to support the Just under every Tryal and Affliction which can befall him, whether from Violence or Hypocrisy, or Wrongs done to him, or Misreports of the Good done by him? indeed, to bind him the more strongly to the only Treasure which can never fail him, and to confirm his Resolution of retaining his Virtue to the last; "Mine Integrity will I not remove, my Righteousness I will hold fast, and not let it go: my Heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

These are the Advantages of this Virtue, and without the sincere Practice of it, they cannot be obtained.

Sermon

SERMON CCXVII.

On the same Subject.

Inferences and Motives.

Rom. xiii. 13. "Walk honestly, as in the Day."

There are some Observations and Inferences resulting from the foregoing Reflections which well deserve our Attention, and ought to influence our Conduct; The which, therefore, we shall now pursue. — And,

First, If the forementioned Advantages accrue from the Discharge of Justice, as it relates to the common Offices between Man and Man, and the Conduct of private Persons, it will be obvious to add, and unfair to omit the great Benefit of DISTRIBUTIVE Justice, in Order hereto.

It is This which directs and enforces the Others, which points out to the Honest and Well-disposed what is their proper Duty, and oblidges others for their own Sakes to observe the legal Rules of Justice and Equity, who have too little Regard to the higher Obligation of Duty itself. It encourages the Virtuous

tuous, and reſtrains the Vicious, and preſerves the Order and Welfare of Society.

Were it, therefore, univerſally effectual, it would work univerſal Harmony and Felicity; and tho thro the natural Defects, to which human Proviſions are ſubject, it cannot reach and reform the Heart, but can only influence the outward Conduct, yet even That muſt have ſome conſiderable Effect, and well deſerves Acknowledgement and Reward. — Indeed,

If all Men would once be ſo wiſe as to be honeſtly diſpoſed, if we could believe and hope that all were deſireous to diſcharge their Parts truly and equitably, and to fulfil the Offices of COMMUTATIVE Juſtice, yet that of DISTRIBUTIVE would not therefore ceaſe to be uſeful or neceſſary; ſince we muſt guard againſt the Miſtakes of ſome, as much as againſt the Wickedneſs of others, and muſt have ſome Rule and Place of Appeal to determine the Differences which ariſe amongſt good Men, as well as to correct the Injuries of bad Ones. — For,

Thro another Defect of Nature, (which we have but too frequent Occaſion of obſerving,) Wiſdom is not always the inſeparable Attendant of Honeſty, and even the higheſt Degrees of Wiſdom will not reach to Infallibility. Prejudices and Prepoſſeſſions cloud the greateſt Improvements of Underſtandings,

and even the wiſeſt and beſt Men can ſcarce diveſt themſelves ſo far of all Partiality and Self-influence, as to judge with the ſame Indifference in their own Caſes, as they would do in that of others.

It was requiſite, therefore, that the Power of Deciſion ſhould be lodged in prudent and diſintereſted Hands; on which Account the Offices of DISTRIBUTIVE Juſtice will continue neceſſary as long as there is either Weakneſs or Wickedneſs in the World (i.e) as long as the preſent State and Frame of the World ſhall continue.

2dly, The ſecond Obſervation, is, the entire Coincidence of the Law and the Goſpel, in enforcing, tho with different Motives, the ſame beneficial Rules of Life.

As One is mediately, the Other more immediately derived from the Fountain of all Authority, and Giver of all Property, they meet in the Concluſion, and jointly require from every particular Perſon a Conduct which would conduce to the Welfare of all.

The Diſpenſers of each are Miniſters in the ſame Cauſe of Holineſs and Happineſs, and if they diſcharge their Offices faithfully, do mutually contribute to leſſen each other's Burden. The One by laying a wiſe and proper Reſtraint on Conduct, involve thoſe

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in Inconſiſtencies and Difficulties, who reſtrain not themſelves by Principle; and thereby facilitate at leaſt the Work of thoſe who are exerting them to ſubmit to the Dictates and Reſtraints of Conſcience; — The Others, by beginning with the Obligation of Virtue, and the Regulation of the Heart, prevent the moſt unacceptable Part of the Buſineſs of the Diſpenſers of Diſtributive Juſtice, and produce, of Courſe, That peaceful, ſocial, and uſeful Behaviour, which was the very Intent of all Legal Proviſions to inculcate and require. — Nor,

Are their reciprocal Offices barely ASSISTANT, but NECESSARY to each other; nor, can we judge certainly to which of theſe, the Regularity of the greater Part of the World is owing.

That All are not influenced in all their Conduct, is too ſure, tho ſad, a Truth; but even they who admit the important Doctrines of Revelation, and acknowledge, when they think at all, that the Welfare of Eternity is depending on their preſent Behaviour, do yet often ſtifle theſe Thoughts, and guide their whole Practice by its Subſerviency to their preſent Intereſt. Theſe will, therefore, thro prudential Motives decline ſuch Paths as would make them obnoxious to the Chaſtiſement and Correction of Authority; and will, for their own Sakes, be honeſt to their Neighbours.

as far as the Law would reach them, if they were otherwise: This, therefore, is of some considerable Use.

But then, — on the other Hand, It must be considered, how often these prudential Motives deceive those, who have laid aside Regard to Religion, when they come to a difficult and tempting Trial; how often they involve themselves much further than their original Intention, even to the gross Violation of Law as well as Conscience; and, it is further to be considered how often the Law may be evaded or overruled, and how many momentous Injuries, when they are designedly so contrived, be offered to others, for which no Redress can be obtained in that Method. Our Ignorance of the Person of the Offender, or some Difficulties in apprehending him, our Want of competent Evidence against him, or further Forgeries which may defeat that Evidence, and above all, the Mistake of Mercy in the frequent Pardons after full and clear Conviction, These and Other Circumstances may prevent the Design of Legal Remedies, and are known to do it daily in various Instances, – These encourage the Ill-disposed to violate other's Rights thro Hopes of Impunity, and discourage the Injured from Endeavours of Prosecution, who often find the first Injury the least Loss, and therefore rather endure it, than suffer greater, tho Others are thereby enduced

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to perſevere and advance ſtill further in their evil Courſes.

Thus, where Conſcience in not the Guide, the beſt Laws muſt frequently prove inſufficient, and tho in ſome Caſes they have confeſſedly a good Effect, yet in many others they cannot but fail of it. But Conſcience, as far as it does extend, makes all penal Laws needleſs, and works immediately That Fidelity and Truth to which the others were intended to compell us.

Tho all who believe, are not guided by their Belief; yet ſtill it is not to be doubted, but that there are many that are, who bear reſignedly a Condition of Poverty and Diſtreſs, and would reject, with Horror, a Thought of relieving themſelves by Falſehood and Wrong. — Whereas,

If religious Principles were removed, every Perſon in Want, would become formidable to Society, as having ſcarce any thing to reſtrain him from relieving himſelf by the Ruin of others; hoping to evade the Courſe of Juſtice, as many do; at leaſt, according to the Notions they have imbibed, Death itſelf would only extinguiſh his Being, which would be preferable to his preſent diſtreſsful Condition. Preſent Pain, or the Cravings of Nature unſatisfied would be the greateſt of all Evils to him who believes no future Exiſtence, and would therefore not barely tempt,

but almoſt neceſſitate him to ſatisfy his Deſires at all Events, without Regard to the Diſtinctions of Right and Wrong.

Nor, would this be the Caſe merely with the loweſt and moſt diſtreſſed Part of Mankind, but proportionally with thoſe who are above mere natural Wants; but yet want the Conveniencies or perhaps the Pleaſures of Life.

Theſe would have the ſame Inducements to gratify their Wants, thro Hope of evading Diſcovery, or over-ruling Vengeance, and could have no ſufficient Reſtraint, ſince their Succeſs in theſe Points would really be to them the moſt valuable Purſuit that could engage their Thoughts.

If we riſe yet higher, and conſider thoſe in the moſt opulent Condition of Life, the ſame Argument and the ſame Temptations will return. The Unſatisfactorineſs of every human Enjoyment, the conſequent Increaſe of Deſire in Proportion to That of Poſſeſſion, and the peculiar Cravings of Ambition or Avarice, will as earneſtly incline them to embrace all Opportunities of riſing on their Neighbour's Ruin, as inferior Gains would allure their Inferiors in Station.

For, If Life was conſidered as valuable only for its preſent Advantages, and Death regarded as the Concluſion

Concluſion of all Hopes and Fears, This would, in ſome Reſpects, be reaſonable Conduct, whatever Objections might, on other Accounts, be offered againſt it.

The Reſult is, that the Doctrines, which Religion inculcates, are thoſe only which can ſecure the Paſſions of the Wealthy, and ſupport the Afflictions of the Diſtreſſed, and enable Both to paſs through this Life with any Degree of Satisfaction and Comfort, by the Proſpect of a happier State in Reverſion. And the Inference plainly ariſing from theſe Reflections on the reciprocal Service of Civil and Religious Inſtitutions towards each other's Efficacy, is the reciprocal Eſteem, Reſpect, and Affection, which the Miniſters of Both ought to ſhew to each other.

If we, in earneſt, deſire to contribute to the Amendment and Felicity of the World, there muſt be a ſuitable Regard ſhewn to thoſe who muſt be the Inſtruments of it; and if a real Hope and Proſpect of ſuch Amendment can ever be admitted, it can only be by the joint Aſſiſtance and mutual Friendſhip of Magiſtrate and Paſtor. The Miniſters of the Goſpel muſt ever inculcate Submiſſion and Reverence to the Diſpenſers of the Law; Who, if they would ſupport their own Dignity, and promote the Eaſe and Succeſs of their own Office, are equally bound to protect and encourage the faithful Spiritual Guide in the beneficial

al Deſign and Diſcharge of his ſacred Function.

When Either of theſe omit the Regard due to the Other, they weaken their own Influence; for the Conſequence is very obvious and natural, when Men inſtead of eſteeming, learn to deſpiſe "thoſe who are ſet over them in the Lord, and admoniſh them;" and when, by the ſame Air and Strain of Licentiouſneſs, they learn to "deſpiſe Dominions and ſpeak evil of Dignities;" — when thoſe, who are to teach and exhort Men to live better, and thoſe who are to require and oblidge them to it, are thus contemptuouſly treated with Scorn and Abuſe, the Progreſs of Immorality and unſocial Conduct is eaſy to be foreſeen, but with difficulty to be prevented; and therefore every Well-wiſher to Society would inculcate all due Regard to the Authority of each, whilſt Neither exceed their proper Bounds.

The Wiſdom of our Conſtitution has diſcerned this Connection, and conſequently has aſſigned to Each their proper Countenance and Force, deſigning to ſtrengthen the Cauſe of Regularity and Virtue by the Part allotted to Each in the Eſtabliſhment.

The Licentious and the Prophane are naturally diſpoſed to undermine and over-throw them; but, as they have uſually the ſame Enemies, it is highly reaſonable that they ſhould have the ſame Friends, and

particularly that they ſhould underſtand their own Intereſt ſo well, as to ſupport and regard Each other even for the Sake of ALL. — But further,

Another Obſervation proper to be offered on this Subject relates to the Method of preſerving Juſtice, or the Means whereby we may keep ourſelves free from the Violation of it.

If the foregoing Reflections have convinced us of the Nature and Neceſſity of this Virtue, our next Care muſt be to maintain a Practice ſuitable to ſuch Conviction. We muſt avoid the uſual Temptations to an Offence which will thus render us obnoxious to the Laws both of God and Man. — We muſt conſider the Occaſions of it, decline them totally if they are immoral in themſelves, and conduct them cautiouſly if they are only dangerous Avenues to it.

And, — What are generally the Springs of Injuſtice and Diſhoneſty may be learnt from a curſory View of the Practice of Others, if not from the nearer Experience of our own Hearts. There is ſcarce any one evil Diſpoſition, which is not at ſome Time or other an Inducement to this Tranſgreſſion. Indeed, the moſt contrary Tempers and Vices do often in this Reſpect produce the ſame Effect, and thoſe which agree in nothing elſe, yet meet and center at laſt in the Violation of Equity. Thus the Profuſe and Extravagant

travagant are tempted to Injuſtice to ſupport their vain and immoderate Expences; and the Sordid and Penurious, to increaſe and extend their unprofitable Stores. Indeed, all the various, and even the moſt oppoſite Paſſions and Inclinations, if not watched with Jealouſy, and corrected by Principle, will lead to Diſhoneſty, and render Men injurious to Society, tho perſonal Indulgence was the firſt and moſt direct Object of their Purſuit; for, the Intereſts of ſocial Creatures are ſo mixed and interwoven, that we can ſcarce engage in any wrong Purſuit ourſelves, but it will neceſſarily involve us in Miſconduct towards others.

The only Preſervative, therefore, is a Reſolution of an uniform habitual Regularity, influenced by the Fear, and directed by the Will of God. Religion has been already ſhewn to be the only ſolid Support of Society, and it is the Application of thoſe religious Principles to ourſelves, which muſt ſupport us in a regular Courſe of Virtue. When we conſider ourſelves as ſent hither by Providence to work out our Salvation, as ſtationed here for a ſhort Term only, but preparative to the Welfare of a whole Eternity, when we thus conſider ourſelves as acting under the Divine Inſpection, and every Day haſtening towards his dreadful Tribunal, the Temptations to Injuſtice

Juſtice and Diſhoneſty vaniſh into nothing, and every Occaſion of it appears as trifling under the Thought of That awful Account.

The Importance of the Event depending, the Tranſitorineſs of the Paſſage leading to it, the Goodneſs of God which has bleſſed us with ſuch great Hopes, and the Terror of his Vengeance attending the Neglect or Abuſe of them, are Arguments ſufficient to work on the Mind and regulate the Conduct of any thinking Being, who has either Generoſity, or Prudence, any Regard either to Piety or Intereſt.

The World itſelf under Theſe great Thoughts ſinks into Inſignificancy: its Pleaſures, which are purſued with ſuch earneſt Vehemency, weigh "lighter than Vanity itſelf," and its Miſeries, which are dreaded with ſuch extreme Terror, appear equally contemptible; and our Saviour's Queſtion ſhines in its true and utmoſt Force [viz] "What ſhall it profit a Man, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? or what ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?" — But,

4thly, A further Reflection, tending to the ſame End of regulating our Conduct, and raiſing our Hopes to higher and better Objects, may be offered from this View of the Subject before us, which deſerves our Notice.

The frequent Violations of Juſtice, which daily Experience preſents to our Obſervation in numberleſs Inſtances, are obvious Arguments againſt ſetting our Affections on things which are liable to ſuch continual Changes and Chances.

Are our Hearts fixed on this World and its Poſſeſſions, as containing ALL that we want or deſire? — It is THEN in the Power of the meaneſt and moſt contemptible Enemy we have, to defeat our whole Deſign, and deſtroy our Scheme of Happineſs. Had we made our Choice never ſo right in other Reſpects (were Riches or Pleaſures as ſure a Fund of Felicity as we are apt to imagine,) yet, beſides their ſpeedy End by Nature and Neceſſity, the early Hazards which threaten them from the evil Diſpoſitions or preſſing Want of thoſe we converſe with, would render our beſt Hopes moſt inſecure, and leave us to the hourly Apprehenſion of Ruin from accidental Loſs or wilful Violence.

Every Man, who will venture his own Life and Welfare, may certainly deſtroy That of his Neighbour, and when Reſentments run high, or Neceſſities preſs hard, if they act not upon ſolid Principles, the Peace or Property of the other has but ſlender Security.

The obvious Inference from hence, is, that we ſhould fix our Affections on more valuable and ſe-

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cure Poſſeſſions, and, agreeably to our Saviour's Advice, "lay not up for ourſelves Treaſures upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break thro and ſteal; but that we ſhould lay up our Treaſures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break thro nor ſteal." — Again,

Another Obſervation which I ſhall make, ſhall be on the great Degeneracy which human Nature is capable of, when left to itſelf, when deſerting and deſerted by its Maker.

Man, formed to help and aſſiſt his Fellow-Creatures becomes the Peſt and Plague of Society, and is found to do more effectual Miſchief than all the noxious Parts of the Creation, or all the accidental Misfortunes of the more uſeful. He, in whom others ſhould put their Confidence, becomes the moſt dreaded Enemy of all. Laws are found always neceſſary, but often ineffectual to guard againſt him, and where Religion is not his Guide, neither the Privilege of Reaſon, nor the Tenderneſs of Nature, are able to reſtrain him from offering perſonal Violence, as well as invading juſt Rights. Barbarities, which Humanity recoils at the Mention of, are often the Progreſs and Concluſion of diſhoneſt & injurious Conduct; for, a hardened Heart will gradually extinguiſh the beſt Impreſſions of Nature. (Serm. CCXVII.) If

If then we abhor the last Step, we must guard with Caution against the first which leads to it. We must be careful in minuter Instances to with-hold our Hands from That which is another's Right, and we shall be in no Danger of adding Violence to Dishonesty. We must imprint and cultivate a "Love of our Neighbour" in our Hearts, and then we shall be so far from studying to do him Harm, that we shall be industrious in finding Opportunities of doing him Good. All our Aims and Endeavours will be to promote the general Happiness of all our Species, and such a general and habitual Benevolence will not only secure us from acting, and then from suffering any Degree of Injury, but will improve every Occasion of Kindness and Service which Providence shall happily present to us.

Justice and Honesty, then, (preserved thro Faith in God, and the Love of our Neighbour,) are great and prime Duties of the Christian Religion, bringing Advantage to us, and Benefit to the World, as its Contrary is the most destructive, both of the Peace and Welfare of all Men, here and hereafter.

In vain, therefore, shall we boast ourselves of our most holy Faith, of Faith in God, and Piety towards him, if we are destitute of this Part of practial Righteousness; for, "his Children ye are, not whom in Words

Words only ye confeſs, but whom in Actions ye obey."

"Walk honeſtly, therefore, as in the Day," and "let your Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good Works, and ſo glorify your Father, which is in Heaven."

The laſt Obſervation I ſhall make from the Whole, is, that ſeeing that no Virtues are better or more ſucceſsfully taught, or adhere more cloſely to us, or remain longer with us, than thoſe which are imbibed in our youthful Days, we be particularly heedful that Children be early initiated into the Duty before us.

We therefore, that are Parents and Maſters of Families, and have to do in the World, ought to be juſt and equal in all our Dealings; in the firſt Place, for the Sake of our own Souls, and next, for the Sake of thoſe more immediately under us, and who are watchful to copy after every Example they ſhall behold, and which, in the Particulars of Fraud and Injuſtice, they will be as apt to imitate, as in any one thing whatever, becauſe of the preſent worldly Advantage it ſeems to bring with it.

Even therefore, in their moſt trivial things, in Play and in Sport, they ſhould be kept in particular Obſervance of Honeſty and Uprightneſs, and to cheat at no Time; becauſe if they are unjuſt in a Little,

they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain considerably by it. (*)

To this Observance both of our own Conduct and the Conduct of those more immediately in Charge under us, we are more nearly concerned than we are generally apt to imagine.

As to ourselves, the vilely Prostitute may perhaps say, "is it not a little?"

But the Commandments of God are not to be trifled with, and we must be chargeable for our own Sins; but, where Others take Pattern by us, the Offence is double; nor will it avail those who are thus influenced by us, who were the Authors of their Sins, if they, thro' our Temptation, are equally guilty with us.

How will it make the Ears of the hardiest of us to tingle, when hereafter (with Dives) we shall "lift up our Heads, being in Torment," and shall hear these Imitators of our Vices thus severely rebuke us?

"Wo is me that I was constrained to dwell with Meseck, and to have my Habitation among the Tents of Kedar, among them that were long Enemies to Peace!" — "Cursed be the Man that begat me, and the Paps that gave me Suck!"

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(*) The surest Way to avoid great Sins, is carefully to abstain from the less.

I cannot Conclude better than with that heavenly Advice from Holy Writ: — "Keep Innocency, and take-heed unto the thing that is right; for That ſhall bring a Man Peace at the laſt."

Sermon

SERMON CCXVIII.

The great Benefit of Uprightneſs.

Prov. x. 9. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh "ſurely."

Self-preſervation is a Principle univerſally implanted in human Nature, and inſeparably united to it. Our own Safety and Security; our own Peace and Proſperity, are what engroſs all our Attention. And without Doubt, our all-wiſe and merciful Creator hath endued us with this Solicitude and Concern for ourſelves and our Welfare, on Purpoſe that we ſhould avoid what would hurt us, and purſue what would make us happy. Security from Evil, therefore, is what we univerſally do, and muſt of Neceſſity deſire. But though the Deſire of Security be an excellent FIRST Step towards the Attainment of it, yet is there no ſmall Difficulty in being able to diſcern where Safety is to be found, that we may fly unto it; and where it is that Danger lies, that we may timely retire from it. Things do many Times appear very different from what in Fact

Fact they are; and a good Deal of Caution and Circumſpection are required that we be not miſtaken in the Notions we form of them. Sufficient Cauſe there is to doubt, whether That be always to be purſued that invites; and to conſider, whether That which is likely to affect us with Pleaſure THIS Moment, will not probably be attended with Pain hereafter; and whether momentary Satisfaction be not too light to be laid in the Balance with laſting Uneaſineſs. And here, we ought with great Thankfulneſs to acknowledge the Goodneſs of God towards us, in that he hath not only implanted in the Nature of Man ſuch a Principle as muſt of Neceſſity make him deſire his own Security and Happineſs, but hath moreover beſtowed upon him the Light of Reaſon to diſcern wherein they conſiſt, the Power to diſtinguiſh between what is fit to be declined as hurtful, or embraced as beneficial to him, to the End that he might not err in his Choice when Good and Evil ſhould be ſet before him. — But ſtill,

Though Man be endued with this excellent Prerogative above all other Creatures, that he can deliberate upon, compare and judge of what paſſes before him, view it in itſelf and in its Conſequences, and prefer one thing to another; yet it muſt be confeſſed he is alſo made ſubject to very ſtrong Paſſions which either ſo cloud and obſcure this noble Light, that he cannot al-

ways clearly diſcern which of the two things he hath compared is fitteſt to be choſen by him, or which ſo overpower his Will as to puſh him on to the Choice of that which in his Judgment he condemns, ſo that the bare Reaſonableneſs of doing or forbearing to do, is not always ſufficient to determine him abſolutely either one Way or the other.

Allowing this to be true, as indeed it is, and that, thro the Diſorder of our Nature, what we would, we often do not; and what we would not, that we perverſely do; there immediately appears the Neceſſity of ſome ſtanding Rule of our Actions for us to walk by, that if at any Time the Reaſon of Things ſhould ſeem to alter, according as frail Men, biaſſed by their Paſſions, might be diſpoſed to think they did, they might have Recourſe to this ſteady, unvariable, poſitive Rule; compare them with it, and by it conduct themſelves ſafely in their moral Ways. And therefore God, as a further Inſtance of his Beneficence to Man, left his Paſſions, to which for wiſe Purpoſes he is made liable, ſhould either hinder him from conſulting his Reaſon or from obeying the Dictates of it, hath moreover given him a poſitive Rule to walk by, a written Law for his Guide. And that a due Regard might be paid to this Law, He hath annexed eternal Rewards and Puniſhments to the Obſervance or Neglect of it. — And again, Leſt

Leſt what is Future and at a Diſtance ſhould not ſo effectually work upon his Hopes and Fears, as what is nearer at Hand and juſt before him; God hath alſo commiſſioned the Civil Magiſtrate to make other Laws in Aid of his own, and intruſted him with the Power of the Sword; to the End that ſuch Men, as have not the Fear of God before their Eyes, might be reſtrained from hurting themſelves, and from obſtructing their own Happineſs, by the Fear of temporal Puniſhments immediately to be inflicted on them.

And again, Leſt ignorant and perverſe Men, left to themſelves, ſhould miſunderſtand or pretend to miſunderſtand theſe Laws, whether divine or human; and when they did not find it convenient to walk uprightly in Conformity to them, ſhould bend them to favour their own Iniquity, and wreſt them to their Deſtruction; God hath appointed Interpreters thereof, fallible Men indeed, but in a particular Manner bred to the Knowledge of theſe Laws, and under as ſtrict Obligation to explain them faithfully, as Others are to obey them ſincerely. (*)

Behold the Care, then, which God hath taken of Man! He hath implanted in him a Deſire of Happineſs,

(*) See Note (*) Page 87, 88. On the Sin and Danger of perverting Laws, by wrong Counſel and Advice.

neſs, that he might endeavour after it. He hath endewed him with an acute Diſcernment, that he might know whether what he deſired was worthy his Purſuit. He hath fenced him about with Laws for his Security, that he might not forfeit the Bleſſings intended him, by making Excurſions from theſe Bounds, to follow his own vagrant Imaginations; And hath alſo annexed both temporal and eternal Sanctions to the Violation or Obſervance of theſe Laws; that if by ſome Paſſions he ſhould be inclined to deviate from the Paths of Piety and Virtue, he might by others be recalled into the right Way; and that walking uprightly therein, according to the beſt Knowledge he hath, or can get, he might alſo walk ſecurely. But,

Before I proceed to the full Explication and Proof of theſe Words, it will be neceſſary to remove a diſcouraging Objection which may be made againſt them.

For, It may be ſaid, that "Altho' the Poſition in the Text, ſhould be allowed as true; yet it contains a Truth of very little Uſe and Comfort to us; being a Promiſe which none of us can apply to his own proper and particular Perſon. For,

If He, who is in every Reſpect RIGHTEOUS, may fairly preſume that he ſhall enjoy a perfect Security upon the whole; yet What is That to Sinners? And

Sinners

Sinners we all are in various Degrees. If Solomon's perfectly good Man is found at laſt to exiſt only in Imagination, and not in Reality; it ſignifies little to Us, what Recompence ſuch a Behaviour may expect and receive."

This is the Objection, and the following Obſervations will ſufficiently take-off its Force.

Firſt, altho' Uprightneſs, (in the uſual Style of Scripture, and in the common Acceptation of the Word,) means Goodneſs in general; yet This ſeems not to be the Character which Solomon here intends to repreſent. It ſeems rather, that he takes Uprightneſs in a more limited Senſe, and conſiders it as a ſocial Virtue producing a good Conduct towards others; And then, his Meaning will be, that he who in all his Dealings, acts as becomes him, will, in Return, receive Good from others.

What induceth us to ſuppoſe that This is the Virtue which Solomon hath more particularly in View, is the Contraſt, between the former and latter Part of the Sentence.

"He that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely: but he that perverteth his Ways ſhall be KNOWN." "ſhall be known;" – of whom? certainly of Men. As to his being known of God, that is True at all Times, but is rather foreign from the Purpoſe. A wicked

Man is always known of God, from whom nothing is hidden. When therefore Solomon ſaith "he ſhall be KNOWN," is as much as to ſay, He ſhall be diſcovered and expoſed, in Deſpite of all his Diſſimulation, and Men ſhall abhor, and treat him as he deſerves.

Now conſequently, if the upright Man is He, who performs his Duty to his Neighbour, and behaves himſelf well in civil Society, Then we muſt alſo ſuppoſe the promiſed Reward of Safety, to be alſo of the ſocial Kind, [viz] Security and Peace, Honour and Reputation, Eſteem and Favour, Encouragement and Aſſiſtance, rather than the future Rewards of Righteouſneſs, which come not properly here into Conſideration.

Admitting this Interpretation, we have then an Encouragement in well-doing, which any Perſon may apply to himſelf upon Conditions, which are by no Means impracticable by us, or even difficult or uncommon.

Another Remark tending to illucidate the ſame, is, that tho we ſhould ſuppoſe the Uprightneſs (mentioned in the Text) to mean Goodneſs in general, and a Goodneſs to which we cannot pretend; yet we may hope to make ſome Advances towards it, and conſequently may hope to come-in, for ſome Share of the Reward. If he who walks uprightly in ALL Re-

ſpects

ſpects, walketh ſurely in ALL Reſpects; he then who endeavours to do ſo, and on ſeveral Occaſions really doth it, will obtain ſome Degree of Safety and Security, proportionally to his moral Improvements.

Having thus ſhewed that the Reward propoſed by Solomon may be conſidered as attainable, more, or leſs, by thoſe who are not Deſpiſers of their Duty, and void of good Qualities; we will now take his Words in their full Latitude, (tho perhaps in a greater, than he intended,) and ſuppoſe that Uprightneſs means Goodneſs in general, and that Safety means Security in every Senſe, and in every Reſpect. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely."

Religion, wherever it is truly embraced & practiſed, hath a natural and direct Tendency to do Men good, and to ſecure them from all Harm whatever: For, for this very Purpoſe it was that God at firſt gave and planted it among Men, that they might hereby be Partakers of the Divine Nature, by regulating their Deſires, and governing their Paſſions by the Rules of it, and ſo "walk in Love, as God himſelf is Love."

But, not to the reſt the Matter on this general Head, let us proceed to Particulars, and ſhew the natural Power and Tendency of Religion,

Firſt, To ſecure us from all Harm whatever.

II. To ſecure to us all Good, both temporal and eternal. — And,

First, Uprightneſs, as it is a Conformity to the Divine and human Laws, does, in this moral and legal Rectitude of it, ſecure us,

1ſt. From Shame.

2dly. From Remorſe of Conſcience.

3dly. From Puniſhment, temporal and eternal.

First, In the Obſervance of the Laws of God and of Man, conſiſts our Security from Shame.

Men naturally deſire to be thought well of, in general; and there are particular Perſons, whom we ſo love or revere, that we would not forfeit their good Opinion of us for any thing this World contains; and others, perhaps, ſo ill affected to us, that we ſhould be loath to give them Occaſion to triumph over our Weakneſs; or the Pleaſure to rejoice at our Diſgrace.

Reputation is as dear to ſome Men as their Lives. (*) Some have not been able to outlive the Loſs of it. Others have thought no Hazards, no Labours, no Auſterities, too great to retrieve it. That Men put a very great Value upon it, there needs no other Proof, than that whoever goes about to leſſen it, muſt do it at his Peril. A Hurt of this Kind will not fail to raiſe ſome Reſentment in the Breaſt of every Sufferer.

And indeed, a good Character is of that Importance, that not to value it very highly, is to be profli-

(*) See Vol. viii. Page 271.

gate,

gate,—and thoſe who pretend not to care what Others ſay of them, are miſtaken, if they are ſerious Men. For it is the Power of doing good, and of inеſtimable Price. The Hopes of it incite to what is laudable, and the Attainment of it makes us careful to preſerve it, and ſtudious to improve it.

Now Shame is the Senſe of a Loſs of Reputation, of our having done ſomething which we ſhould not have done, and for having done which, Men will have a bad Opinion of us. And what ſurer Courſe can we take to avoid this Uneaſineſs of the Mind, than by being ſtrict Obſervers of the Laws of God and of our Country?

With Regard to the Laws of God, there is a Dignity and Gracefulneſs in them, as they oblidge to Virtue. To be ſuperior to a Temptation, is Greatneſs, as well as Goodneſs. To ſubdue inordinate Affections, and to bring into Captivity every irregular Thought to the Obedience of the Law of God, is a Victory that ſhews more Conduct and Courage, and ought to be Matter of greater Triumph, than to conquer Armies. In Vice there is a Meanneſs, a Reproach to our Reaſon, a Reflection upon our Diſcretion, an Impeachment of that Patience, and Fortitude, and ſteady Reſolution, by which great and good Men abſtain from whatever is miſbecoming or unworthy of them, or will be ſhameful to them.

That vicious Men do themſelves think Vice to be ſhameful, is evident, in that they chooſe to practiſe it ſecretly; and if they are diſcovered, yet, to avoid as much of Shame as they can, find it neceſſary to extenuate their Faults; and ſometimes to prevent Diſcovery, and the Shame conſequent upon it, are guilty of the greateſt Crimes that can be committed; and through Impatience of other's Conſciouſneſs of their Folly, are ſometimes tempted to wiſh the Witneſſes of it out of the World, even though there be no Apprehenſion they will divulge it. They are in Pain in the Company of ſober Men, having a Miſgiving of Heart that others know what they know amiſs of themſelves; the true Reaſon of ſeeking a Refuge, and finding a Pleaſure, in the Converſation of thoſe, of whom they know as much ill as they know of themſelves. Mutual Guilt fears no Imputation, it not only doth not accuſe, but excuſes, and even juſtifies by ſuch Sort of Reaſonings, as, to the Parties concerned, appear plauſible, and of which it is their Intereſt and their Comfort not to ſee the Error. Why ſhould One have a great Deal, and Another nothing, is to them a ſufficient Argument for the invading the Property of any Man; forgetting that their own Idleneſs, and Lewdneſs, and Intemperance, are the Cauſe that they have no Property of their own, or that others

are backward to give them what they foreſee will not better their Condition. But,

There are Men, it is ſaid, who boaſt themſelves of their Wickedneſs, and, in their own Repreſentation of their immoral Atchievements, make themſelves a great deal worſe than they really are; from whence it ſhould ſeem as if they thought, not Infamy, but Reputation belonged to their evil Deeds. But in this there may be a Miſtake.

The Praiſe they ſolicit is not to the evil Deed, but to the Dexterity and Addreſs, to the Activity and Diſpatch, to the Intrepidity and Preſence of Mind, with which it is committed. For all theſe Qualities, when applied to laudible Purpoſes, are really laudable. But no Man, ſurely, can think that Wickedneſs is an Honour to him. The utmoſt that can be ſaid, is, that Modeſty, by Degrees may be impaired. That from an Impatience of Reproach, they may reſolve not to be affected with it. And, after having done Violence to themſelves in ſuppreſſing the Senſe and Feeling of it, may appear as unconcerned for their immoral Behaviour, as if they were innocent. This, however, hinders not, but that there will forever be a great Deal of Difference between the Impudence of a diſſolute hardened Profligate, and the humble and becoming Confidence of a clear Conſcience.

Let us ſee, in the next Place, whether the Violation of Human Laws, reaſonable & equitable, be not alſo Matter of Shame to every ſerious Man, who wiſhes the Peace of Societies, or makes a Conſcience of his Duty to God. (*)

That the Law-makers do themſelves often break the Laws; – that there is a general Remiſneſs in the Executi-

(*) When we ſay that Uprightneſs is a Conformity to Human Laws, we would be underſtood to mean ſuch Human Laws as are reaſonable, and equitable, and not againſt the Law of Nature, or the Law of God. This, ſurely, is not unneceſſarily obſerved; ſince unreaſonable Laws have been, and doubtleſs, ſtill are in all Countries, to which Men may be tempted to conform for Fear of Puniſhment; at the ſame Time that they may think themſelves obliged not to conform in Point of Conſcience.

Againſt ſuch as theſe, the Prophet Eſaias crieth out, "Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil." And again, "Wo unto them that decree unrighteous Decrees." And Tully hath occaſionally thought it proper to ſay, that "Nothing can be more fooliſh than to think that all is juſt that is contained in Human Inſtitutes; ſince theſe are often obtained by Force or Fraud, to effectuate the private Schemes of Men of Power, without any Regard to Publick Utility."

How many of our own Statutes have been amended, which ſhews they were imperfect; and how many repealed, which ſuppoſes they were inconvenient? And it would be to flatter the Legiſlature to ſay, there were none that are bad ſtill remaining unrepealed.

We do not, then, mean that Uprightneſs conſiſts in a Conformity to ſuch Human Laws as theſe, but in a Conformity to ſuch as are reaſonable, and equitable, and not againſt the Law of Nature, or the Law of God; and even to ſuch as of which we do not ſee the Reaſon, if therein we ſee no Unreaſonableneſs, Iniquity, or Contrariety to the Law of Nature, or to the Law of God.

Execution of them; – that ſome in Power like it better that Men ſhould be rather obnoxious to the Laws, than puniſhed by them; – that Numbers are equally guilty of the ſame Violations; – and that ſome will argue, what is not Evil in itſelf may be innocently done, tho forbidden by Human Laws, the Penalty being ſubmitted to upon Diſcovery; are Conſiderations that may leſſen the Terror of breaking Human Laws, but not the Shame, or at leaſt not the Shamefulneſs of it.

But, beſides that the Laws of Men are to be obeyed for the Sake of God, is there no Shame in breaking That Law which we have firſt agreed and conſented ſhould be made a Law? Is it not better for our Country that its Laws ſhould be ſtrictly obſerved, than that they ſhould not? And is there no Shame in having ſo little Regard to the Welfare of our Country, as to break the Laws of it ourſelves, and to ſhew others the Way to do it?— On the other Hand,

Is there no Dignity in doing That which is right, if, for no other Reaſon but for this, becauſe it is right? Is there not greater Dignity in doing that which is right, the fewer there be that do it? – Is there not ſtill greater Dignity in doing that which is right, the more we may do that which is wrong with Impunity? – Beſides, Is there no Shame in being diſcovered? Doth not that Term ſuppoſe that we are found doing what we

ſhould not do? Doth it not alſo ſuppoſe that we are doing it in a covert Way, and in a clandeſtine Manner? And is it becoming a Man of Honour and Virtue to do any thing which he is afraid ſhould be known; that he ſhould bluſh to be ſurpriſed in, that he ſhould be troubled to hear of? If it be not right, why does he attempt it? If it be right, why is he afraid to appear in it? Does not the being ſurpriſed in a thing One ſhould not do, confound a Man that hath any Modeſty? Does he know which Way to look, or what to do?

There are ſome, indeed, who, ſenſible enough of Shame, in departing from certain frivolous Rules of Honour of their own making, live in the utter Contempt of the Laws of God and Man, ſhameleſs; and not only ſo, but arrogate alſo a Sort of Reputation to their immoral and unlawful Actions, and often make themſelves a great Deal worſe than they are, purely for the Magnanimity they think there is in being above Reſtraint. But let them not be miſtaken. Shame doth not leſs attend them, becauſe they have learnt to glorie in it. The End and Deſign of Laws is to curb the vicious and irregular Appetites of Men. And where is the Reputation of owning they are ſo much more vicious and irregular than other People, that the Laws themſelves are not able to reſtrain them?

With

With Regard to many Laws, purely political, there are alſo Multitudes who profeſſedly live, and allow themſelves in the Breach of them. Conceiving, perhaps, that what is not evil in itſelf is therefore innocent; that their Numbers will keep them in Countenance, and protect them from Shame; and that there can be no great Harm in the Violation of theſe Laws, ſo long as they are ready to ſubmit to the Penalty of them, if they be diſcovered. — But,

However ready they be to ſubmit to the Penalty of the laws they violate, yet is there no Shame in Penalty? Have Rewards and Penalties loſt their Nature, or if Praiſe attends the One, doth not Diſgrace adhere to the Other?

There is, therefore, no Security from Shame but in Uprightneſs, (i.e) in a ſtrict Conformity to the divine and human Laws. The Hypocrite well knows the Value of this Virtue, and how much it concerns his worldly Intereſt that Men ſhould have a good Opinion of his Integrity. And therefore, though he is not upright, yet he pretends to be ſo. But as this in him is Diſſimulation, and not Virtue, ſo the Event is generally the ſame to him and to other wicked Men. He cannot always be upon his Guard. There are Times when the exact Obſerver will ſee through, or at leaſt have Reaſon to ſuſpect, that artful Behaviour,

by which he would ſteal away the Reputation which only belongs to upright Men. And the World is generally ſo ill-natured, that whomſoever they ſuſpect, they greatly defame.

But what Diſgrace can ever attend the Man who does his Duty? Who, conſidering his own Imbecility, thinks it a Privilege to be under the Reſtraint of wholeſome Rules, and his greateſt Honour to obey them? Wrapped in his own Virtue, Envy and Malice cannot hurt him. The Love and Eſteem of all good Men are engaged to protect and defend him.

But were it poſſible for Men to wear this Diſguiſe without Suſpicion, and to ſin ſo privately that they ſhould not be found out, and that Shame ſhould not always be the Conſequence of evil Deeds; yet let them not hereby think themſelves ſecure, ſo long as they ſhall be ſubject,

2dly, To Remorſe of Conſcience.

Peace of Mind is the greateſt Bleſſing Man can have, and That alone which gives a Reliſh to all other Enjoyments. This is what we aim at in all our Purſuits, and if we can be ſo happy as to arrive at it, is an ample Recompenſe of all our Labours. Neither Riches, nor Honours, nor Preferments, nor popular Applauſe, nor great Men's Favour can beſtow it. The only Source from whence it ſprings, is a Man's own

own Breaſt, which, kept clean and unpolluted, will be an inexhauſtible Fountain of the moſt refreſhing Waters. Nothing but Uprightneſs can ſecure to us this Peace of Mind, this lovely Tranquility. "There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked." For every Man, who is conſcious to himſelf of evil Deeds, carries about with him his own Accuſer, his own Tormentor. Before he has commited the premeditated Crime, his Thoughts are ſo taken up with the Proſpect of ſome preſent Pleaſure or Advantage reſulting from it, that he ſees not the dreadful Conſequences that will attend it; but, after the evil Action is once done, and cannot again be undone; when the Guilt that ſeemed little before it was incurred, is now enhanced, and the Satisfaction or Benefit that was before propoſed, is now diminiſhed; THEN it is, that innumerable uneaſy Thoughts are apt to crowd upon him in a tumultuous Manner; THEN it is, that he feels the inſufferable Pain and Anguiſh of a wounded Spirit. What Refuge does he hope for in Retirement, whilſt the fatal Arrow ſticks faſt within him, and the Mind is at Leiſure to lay before him a faithful Repreſentation of what he dreads to behold? And when, for Eaſe, he would change his Solitude for Society; THEN it is, that, in the midſt of his Amuſements and Diverſions, the Remembrance of Guilt obtrudes itſelf upon him, and

damps the Jollity of all his Entertainments; THEN it is, that he muſt be forced to hear the like Crimes he is guilty of condemned in others, and apply the ſame Cenſures to himſelf which are due to them, with an aching Heart. What Sort of Security is this, to walk diſhoneſtly in By-paths and in crooked Ways, unſeen of Men, if we ourſelves diſapprove the irregular Steps we take, and for ever lament, that we would retreat, and cannot? What avails it any Man to have hid his Theft, his Murder, his Adultery, or his Perjury from Men? The all-ſeeing Eye hath diſcovered him, and the Almighty, with a ſtretched-out Arm, purſues him.

But it may be, there are ſome ſo accuſtomed to do Evil,—of ſo loſt a Reputation, and of ſo ſeared a Conſcience, that they are inſenſible of Shame; and incapable of Remorſe; and who, if theſe were all the fatal Conſequences of doing evil, find no Diſcouragement from hence. If the Violations of the Laws of God and Man were attended with no other Dangers than Infamy and After-reflections full of Horror, they are as ſecure from any Apprehenſions of theſe, as Uprightneſs itſelf can make them. But, God be thanked, theſe ſhameleſs hardened Wretches are ſtill of the ſame weak Frame and Make with other Men, are ſtill as ſenſible of external Pain; fear Puniſhment, and fear

Death

Death, like other Men: and the leſs they believe of another World, the more unwilling they are to be hurried out of this. Which brings me to obſerve,

3dly, That their fancied Security in the two former Reſpects, will but more effectually expoſe them to thoſe Dangers which they do, and muſt fear, and from which the upright Man alone can poſſibly be ſecure, [viz.] of temporal and eternal Puniſhment.

The Proſpect of ſome preſent Pleaſure or Profit is the great Temptation to wicked Men to Sin, which would be of little Conſideration to them, if they were thoroughly acquainted with Virtue, "whoſe Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all whoſe Paths are Peace;" and which, as it is, would hardly be a Temptation great enough to overcome them, if they were not buoyed up with the Hopes of Impunity. — But,

Let not the wicked Man flatter himſelf that he ſhall go unpuniſhed, either in this World, or in the World to come. His Deſigns may be deeply laid; — his Schemes may be cunningly contrived; — his outward Behaviour may be ſo plauſible as not to be ſuſpected; he may have ſucceeded in his dark Practices ſo often without Diſcovery, as to be confirmed in his Opinion, "that he ſhall never be found out;" — he may have blamed the Miſconduct of others who have miſcarried in their wicked Enterprizes, and fancy that himſelf, in

the ſame Caſes, could have uſed greater Dexterity, and that however they were taken in the Crafty-wileneſs that they had imagined, yet he could have eſcaped.

But, after all, he cannot be more wary to attempt a Villany, than others will be watchful to diſcover him. The Laws were made for the Security of the Community, and the Breaker of them is a common Enemy. To hurt one Man, is to alarm all Men; and every Man that regards his own Safety, will in this Reſpect be concerned for That of others; and will think it his Intereſt to purſue the Invader of it, and bring him to Juſtice, both that he may be freed from any future Apprehenſion of Injuries from him; and that others, being terrified by the Example of his Puniſhment, may be afraid to offend.

It is very rare that any notable Crime hath eſcaped being brought to Light; and the Numbers yearly convicted and condemned to the Puniſhments they deſerved, might convince any Man, that was not too fond of his own Parts, that running the ſame Hazards, he would not be likely to be more fortunate. No Man that does evil is ever ſecure, however ſecret. He may look about to ſee who ſeeth, but he is not ſure he is not ſeen. If the Darkneſs of the Night invite, the Silence of it often betrays. If the Villain goes alone, there is uſually a miſgiving of Heart and Fearfulneſs

to

to attempt; there is uſually a Slowneſs to diſpatch what was at firſt intended, and a Diſorder in his own Scheme, and an Invitation of Reſiſtance; all which tend to Diſcovery. In the Confidence of an Accomplice, there is no better Security. What his Fidelity would hide, the other's Inadvertence may diſcloſe. What the preſent Friendſhip conceals, future Diſagreements may lay open. — Who is ſafe from the Weakneſs, or Folly, or Paſſion of a frail Criminal? — What wicked Man is above the Temptation that may be offered for a wanted Diſcovery? — What Taciturnity is to be expected in the Decay of Parts, or Loſs of Senſes, which in the Courſe of Life may happen to any Man? — What Sagacity can foreſee all the Queſtions that may be put to ſuſpected Perſons? or be able to evade the Force of them, or to contrive a Defence ſo connected, ſo uniform, and agreeing in all its Parts, as that the Audience ſhall not fail to pity the falſely accuſed, and retire under a full Perſuaſion of their Innocence? Or, what, if a wicked Partner ſhould repent, and not being able to make Reſtitution for the Wrongs he hath done, ſhould, under the Terrors of his Conſcience, think himſelf obliged, in his laſt Moments, when he is launching into Eternity, to confeſs his Crimes, and fearing no other Reproach like That of his own Heart, to declare who it was that betrayed

him into them, or aſſiſted him in them? — But,

If Men of This bad Character are uſually ſo hardened that nothing of this needeth to be feared, (though this in Fact hath often happened,) yet who is always ſo wary and circumſpect in doing ill, and after he hath done it, that he can be ſure he ſhall not betray himſelf? There is a Hurry and a Confuſion that attends Guilt, in the midſt of which Thoſe very things are often done to cover, which effectually expoſe the wicked Perſon. God Almighty will infatuate him, that he may deſtroy himſelf. "He is afraid where no Fear is; he fleeth when no Man purſueth;" and, as it were, offers himſelf up to the Puniſhment he ſeeks to eſcape.

But, alas! what are temporal Puniſhments compared with eternal! If thoſe are to be dreaded becauſe they are more immediate; theſe are juſtly terrible, in that they are more exquiſite and laſting. Therefore let not "the Heart of Man be ſet in him to do Evil, becauſe Sentence is not executed ſpeedily againſt him." Nor let him flatter himſelf that This is at ſo great a Diſtance. How ſhort is the longeſt Life compared with Eternity! It is even as nothing. At beſt, it is but a Span long; and God Almighty, incenſed at the Diſobedience of Men, may be provoked to cut it ſhorter than they are aware of. When a Man is deſcending to the Grave, and muſt enter into an eternal

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State of Happineſs or Miſery, according as he hath obeyed or diſobeyed the Laws of his Maker, what are all "the Pleaſures of Sin which he hath enjoyed for a Seaſon?" What Security is it to him to have been able to evade the Examinations of an earthly Magiſtrate, and to have eſcaped the Puniſhment aſſigned to the Breach of human Laws? The Damnation that he hath been ſo often warned of, and which ſeemed at a Diſtance, now lingereth not, and the juſt Vengeance of God is ready to overtake him. In vain doth he call to the Hills to hide him, and to the Rocks to cover him, for "all things are naked and open to the all-ſeeing Eyes" of the ſupreme Judge with whom he now hath to do. Nor hath there been any thing heretofore ſo ſecret, which ſhall not now be made manifeſt: But the Righteous ſhall enter into the Joy of their Lord, and the Upright ſhall dwell before Him.

Sermon

SERMON

On the ſame Subject.

Benefits of Uprightneſs.

Prov. x. 9. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh "ſurely."

Happineſs is the favourite Wiſh, and the darling Object which all Men purſue; And, in theſe Words we have a conſiderable Inſtance of the Advantage of Religion, and of the Tendency of it, to promote and ſecure to us the utmoſt of our Deſire herein, during our Paſſage thro this World, and beyond it, even to the endleſs Ages of Eternity; HERE generally, and for the moſt Part; and the LATTER infallibly, and without Exception. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely."

Solomon ſtands diſtinguiſhed for great Abilities both natural and acquired; and for great Experience of Good and Evil: we might therefore ſafely truſt to his Judgment.

But

But in this Point, we want not the Sanction of his Authority; every Man may ſee the Truth of the Aſſertion, if he will but Make a due Uſe of his Underſtanding "He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely."

It is proper to be mentioned, tho' not neceſſary to be proved, that WAYS and PATHS, in the Language of Scripture, are the Courſes and Manner of our Actions. Theſe Expreſſions are become familiar to us, and every One knows, that to "WALK," ſignifies our uſual Courſe of Dealing, & our common Practice. So that to "walk uprightly," means Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs, Integrity, Piety, and, (in a Word,) all Religion in general: ſo that He may be ſaid to "walk uprightly," who hath ſound Principles; and whoſe Thoughts, Words, and Actions are conformable to them: — and ſuch a Perſon "walketh ſurely," ſafe from Danger, and certain of Succeſs upon the Whole.

As to the former Poſition, we have already proved it, in the great Points of preſerving us from Shame, from the Remorſe of an evil Conſcience, and from preſent and future Puniſhment. — We proceed now,

II. To conſider the Advantages which it ſecures to us. — And firſt,

Be the Times ever ſo bad, the Upright Man hath his Happineſs, that he is ſeldom at a Loſs how to conduct himſelf.

He, of all others, moſt eaſily ſees his Way, it being plain, eaſy, and ſtraight before him. Truth ſits upon his Lips, and is all Times ready to be uttered; being free from Prejudice, which perverts the Judgement, and miſguides the Will, and gives an ill Turn to all our Thoughts, Words, & Actions; as alſo from all Envy, Malice, Pride, and Covetouſneſs, which do in an eſpecial Manner pervert the Mind, he is never carried into any undue Lengths beyond Soberneſs and Truth: as his Heart is pure and clean from all corrupt and vicious Thoughts; ſo the Streams that flow from it, will be clean alſo; and beſides, being poſſeſſed of uniform and univerſal Righteouſneſs, this will cut-off moſt of the Occaſions and Inducements to prevaricate from the Truth. The Ways of Vice and Wickedneſs only, are extremely intricate and dark. Whoever purſues evil Deſigns, & is a Slave to baſe Affections, muſt neceſſarily be entangled in perpetual Labyrinths: for, having many different and inconſiſtent Ends to purſue, he muſt unavoidably be often at a Loſs how to conduct them. Before him is Confuſion, and behind him a deſolate Wilderneſs. — But,

The Contrary of This is the Lot of the Upright Man. For he has only One End to purſue; and That is, to diſcharge a good Conſcience. By This all his Concerns are regulated; and, of Conſequence,

he

he hath no clashing of Interests to perplex his Deliberations; nor little Turns to be served; all his Resolutions are easily made, and he avoids most of those Difficulties which entangle others. His Counsels & Methods are always the same, and he is never at a Loss to behave himself on any Emergency. His Way is commonly so plain, that he requires little Advice or Instruction to find it: "The Integrity of the Upright shall guide him." — "To the Upright there ariseth Light in Darkness." — Again,

If he happens to fall into such Circumstances, as to stand in need of great Advice and Deliberation, yet the Upright Man hath vastly the Advantage of others: because he always enjoys the free Use of his intellectual Powers, and can exert his Reason to its highest Perfection and greatest Advantage: whereas the Man who has sinister Ends to pursue, by indirect Methods, is sadly clouded in his discerning Faculties, so as to hinder him from distinguishing rightly. For whoever frames his Mind by other Measures than those of Honesty and Conscience; whoever intemperately pursues his private Ends, or is a Slave to inordinate Passions, these things will so bias his Soul, as to render him incapable of making a true Judgment of what is right; and expose him to many dangerous Errors in the Management of his Affairs, even in Mat-

ters of little Difficulty. But the Upright Man is not liable to any of theſe Inconveniencies; for having no Turns to ſerve, but what are good and honeſt, nor any private Affections or Paſſions to be gratified, his Conceptions of things are according to their Nature, his Determinations and Reſolutions are reaſonable and proper, ſuch as become the Occaſion. As his main Deſign is to do in all Inſtances what is beſt, ſo that preſerves him from miſtaking what is ſo. His Reaſon and Underſtanding are free and at Liberty, and when any Difficulty ariſes, he of all Men is moſt likely to get out of it with Eaſe.

Thus the Upright Man is ſecure from himſelf; and as to any Danger from Others, even in the worſt of Times, he may, above all Men, promiſe himſelf Safety and Protection, for theſe two Reaſons,

1ſt. Becauſe God, in the wiſe Diſpenſations of his Providence, does frequently incline Men's Hearts to be favourable to thoſe that are truly good.

2dly. Becauſe Goodneſs does; in its own Nature, tend to the gaining Men's Affections and making them our Friends. — And,

1ſt, God himſelf, in the wiſe Diſpenſations of his Providence does frequently incline Men's Hearts to be favourable to thoſe who are truly and ſincerely

good;

good; Whether he does This, at any Time, directly by his own immediate Power, or by the ſecret Diſpoſition of natural and ſecond Cauſes; by the Interpoſition of more or fewer Inſtruments; or without uſing any at all, is not material to enquire; for natural Cauſes are but his Inſtruments. Certain it is, that He in whoſe Hand the Hearts of all Men are, as the Scripture every where teſtifies, can when he pleaſes, by any of theſe Ways, give us Favour in their Sight, and "make even our Enemies to be at Peace with us."

The Providence of God does in a peculiar Manner watch over the Righteous, to preſerve them under All Events. "The Eyes of the Lord, (ſays Solomon,) are in every Place, beholding the Evil and the Good."

As he at firſt created, ſo he ſtill upholds, and rules all things by the Word of his Power; He orders and governs all the Motions in the great Fabrick of the World, and directs the Operations of all Cauſes to the effecting his Deſigns. Whom he protects, no Force or Counſel can hurt; "for he breaketh the Arms of the Mighty, and bringeth the Counſel of the Wicked to nought."

When Sennacherib, the Aſſyrian, came againſt Jeruſalem with that mighty Hoſt, He could "put his Hook in his Noſe, and his Bridle in his Lips, and

cauſe him to return by the ſame Way that he came;" and when Balak King of Moab, truſting more to his Policy than Strength, ſent for Balaam to curſe the Iſraelites, he could turn That Curſe into a Bleſſing: So that there was no Inchantment againſt Jacob, nor Divination againſt Iſrael. Indeed, the whole Hiſtory of the Jewiſh Nation, from the coming out of Egypt, to their final Captivity, is one continued and eminent Inſtance of Providence watching over the Righteous." "In the Wilderneſs God led them like Sheep, and kept them as the Apple of his Eye; He ſuffered no Man to do them Harm, but reproved even Kings for their Sake."

When they came to enter into the promiſed Land, no Force was able to ſtand before them; and when they were poſſeſſed of it, no Nation was able to drive them out. Particularly, when the whole Body of them went up to Jeruſalem to appear before the Lord thrice in the Year, their Land was, by a particular Providence, preſerved, as was promiſed them. (*) In a Word,

So long as they kept God's Commandments, ſo that "He did not behold Iniquity in Jacob, neither had ſeen Perverſeneſs in Iſrael;" they were conſtantly happy and dwelt ſafely; and though we often read, indeed, that they were oppreſſed by their Enemies and brought

(*) Exod. xxxiv. 24.

to

to great Diſtreſs; yet this never happened but when they had firſt departed from their Integrity.

Now, The ſame Providence that preſerves whole Nations, watches likewiſe proportionally over ſingle Perſons; For ſo we read of David, "that the Lord preſerved him whitherſoever he went;" And though under the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, where Immortality is more clearly brought to Light, and the Promiſe of eternal Life more expreſs; temporal Rewards and Protection do not ſo conſtantly attend the Righteous; yet does Providence by no Means wholly neglect them even HERE: But God's Eyes are ſtill upon the Ways of Men, and he ſeeth all their Goings. "Are not two Sparrows, (ſays our Saviour,) ſold for a Farthing? and yet not one of them falleth to the Ground without your Father's Notice! But the very Hairs of your Head are all numbered."

It would be endleſs to produce the many Paſſages in Scripture to this Purpoſe; I ſhall therefore only add That remarkable One, wherein the Upright Man, and his Security in evil Times, are deſcribed after a very particular Manner; "he that walketh righteouſly and ſpeaketh uprightly; that deſpiſeth the Gain of Oppreſſions; that ſhaketh his Hands from holding of Bribes; that ſtoppeth his Ears from hearing of Blood, and ſhutteth his Eyes from ſeeing Evil: he ſhall dwell

on High; his Place of Defence ſhall be the Mountains of the Rocks; his Bread ſhall be given him, his Water ſhall be ſure." (i.e) whoever walks uprightly, and makes a Conſcience of his Ways, ſuch a Man ſhall be always under the watchful Care and Protection of the Divine Providence. God will not ſuffer him to fall into any great Diſtreſs, but will afford him ſuch a Portion of temporal good things, as to render his Life eaſy and ſupportable.

Experience generally verifies the Truth of this; honeſt and upright Men, in the midſt of publick Calamities, for the moſt Part, eſcaping better than thoſe that are otherwiſe. Such, in their greateſt Extremities, when no Proſpect of Deliverance from any human Means have appeared, yet, after a moſt ſtrange, extraordinary, and unexpected Manner, have met with Succour and Relief. And thus attended by the ſpecial Providence of God, they have never been miſerable, however ſometimes afflicted. — But,

2dly, Virtue and Goodneſs does in its own Nature tend to the gaining Men's Affections and making them our Friends; It forceth neceſſarily a certain Love & Veneration from all Men, and challengeth Honour even from thoſe who will not imitate what they are forced to reſpect; So that he who is truly & ſincerely virtuous, muſt be, as moſt certainly acceptable to God, ſo in all Probability approved of Men.

A ſteady Practice of the Duties preſcribed by Religion, is our wiſeſt and moſt effectual Proviſion againſt all thoſe Afflictions which are derived on us from the Malice and Paſſions of other Men.

And how large a Portion of that Scene of Miſery which occurs to us in human Life, is to be aſſigned to this Claſs, we need no other Proof than our own daily Obſervation and Experience. Let us examine the ſeveral Tribes of Mourners whom we meet with in the World; let us attend to the Cries of the oppreſſed, to the deſtitute Exile, or the ſolitary Captive in the Dungeon; in a Word, let us inquire into the Source of all thoſe various Inſtances of public and private Calamities which afflict Mankind; and we ſhall ſoon be convinced, that the far greater Number of them are owing to the Tyranny or Malice, to the Envy, Treachery or Revenge, of unrighteous Men. Now, from theſe Evils, no Skill or Cunning of the World, can give us a Security, equal to That preſcribed to us by our Holy Religion. For,

So long as the Diſtinctions of Good and Evil are acknowledged in the World, the Actions commanded by our holy Religion muſt be approved; for this Diſtinction was not made, and theſe oppoſite Characters affixed to the Actions of Men, from a mere ſpeculative and abſtract Conſideration of their Natures; but with

a manifeſt Relation to their Effects, and the Influence they had on the Happineſs of Mankind, being a Conformity to the eternal Rules of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, which are unchangeable, being founded on the Nature of God, and the real Eſſence of things.

Thoſe Actions were by general Conſent denominated GOOD, which conduce to private & ſocial Felicity; and thoſe Evil, which diſturbed the Peace of the World, or were injurious to the public and private Intereſts of Men. But,

Among all the Schemes of Morality, which have been recommended to the World, none ever appeared ſo exactly calculated for the Happineſs of Men as that revealed and enjoined in the Law of God. It is an Injunction & Imitation of the Actions of God himſelf. And, as no Man is ſo ſtupid as not to admire the Perfections of the Divine Nature, when he conſiders them abſtractedly in God; ſo he cannot but pay a proportionable Reſpect to whatever he ſees bears their Reſemblance in Men.

Natural Reaſon approves the Juſtneſs and Excellency of every Precept enjoined us by Religion; and wherever it had before differed from theſe Directions, is forced to acknowledge its own Error.

We may therefore conclude, that a Conduct agreeable to theſe excellent Rules of Life, muſt lay a gene-

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ſal Obligation on the Gratitude of Mankind, & procure Eſteem and Benevolence to the Man whom it adorns. The moſt ſavage and wicked Diſpoſition cannot but diſcern ſomething lovely and endearing in the Meek and Merciful, the Affable and Courteous, in the Man who goes about doing Good, and who extends his Charity even to his Enemies. The Villain himſelf feels a ſecret Impreſſion of Awe when he approaches ſo venerable a Character: he cannot injure him without ſome Remorſe, and his Hand ſtrikes with Reluctance. Indeed,

The very worſt of Men cannot chuſe but have a good Opinion of that Virtue, which the Dominion of their Luſts will not ſuffer them to practiſe, or which their preſent temporal Intereſt compels them to diſcountenance.

In any Buſineſs of Importance, much rather would they employ a righteous and conſcientious Perſon, than any of the Companions and Partakers of their Vices. Indeed, they cannot but frequently wiſh that they themſelves were the Men they are not; and pray with Balaam, that tho they do not live the Life, yet at leaſt they may die the Death of the Righteous, and that their laſt End may be like his.

But further, Uprightneſs, (i.e) Religion & Virtue, muſt naturally tend to the gaining Men's Affections,

and making them our Friends, becauſe it renders a Man evidently both a profitable Member of the Publick, and likewiſe uſeful to all Men in whatever private Relation they ſtand in to him. It makes him modeſt and humble, peaceable, and ſubmiſſive to his Superiors, in all juſt and reaſonable Inſtances. To his Equals he is juſt and faithful, uſing all Plainneſs and Sincerity in his Dealings: in his Converſation injuring and abuſing no Man; to his Inferiors he is gentle aud condeſcending; not oppreſſing the Weak, nor dealing hardly with thoſe that are under his Power, but encouraging them by his Example in the Ways of Virtue; and in all Kinds of Exigencies, aſſiſting and relieving them to the utmoſt of his Ability.

This is the Behaviour of a truly Upright Perſon in all Relations; a Behaviour, which not only gains Eſteem as far as its good Effects actually extend, but which raiſes Admiration in us even when we meet with it in the Hiſtory of paſt and far diſtant Ages, where it is manifeſt we can have no Concern for the Events of things, nor Prejudices concerning the Characters of Perſons: indeed, which we cannot but commend, even tho it happens to be AGAINST our preſent Intereſt; for the ſame Reaſon, as on the contrary, Men cannot but hate baſe Actions, and diſlike unworthy Perſons, even at the ſame Time that perhaps they profit by them.

But

But the Protection of this Character will eſpecially appear to us, if we conſider, that the moſt barbarous Temper oftener exerts itſelf under the Appearance of Revenge, than of voluntary and unprovoked Miſchief, and will always endeavour to plead in its Defence the Reſentment of ſome real or ſeeming Injury. Now,

If our Conduct be governed by the inoffenſive Rules of the Goſpel, we have the Security of provoking none.

The meek, the humble, the patient Diſciple of Chriſt, does not only not defraud, injure, or oppreſs any Man, but has every Paſſion under Government and Diſcipline, and conſequently raiſes no Enemy by Contempt, none by Cenſure, or Envy. His Purſuits of Life are calm and inoffenſive. He does not willingly croſs the Projects, or break into the Schemes of the Worldly and Ambitious: and if he happens to be engaged in a Competition, (as ſometimes he unavoidably may be,) he confines himſelf to the Bounds of Juſtice and Sobriety; his Diſputes are managed with Moderation and Juſtneſs, without Fierceneſs, Bitterneſs, Slander, or Detraction: and tho he cannot permit himſelf to acknowledge Right to be Wrong, or Juſtice to be Injury, yet rather than be the Occaſion of any extenſive Evil, or of hindering any general Good, he is prepared, in leſſer Matters, to give up

his own Intereſts, and recede even from the moſt equitable Pretenſions. He will avoid in the whole Courſe of his Actions, not only what is really evil, but alſo, ſo far as it is poſſible, all Appearances of it.

This is the Temper, and This will be the Conduct, of all who ſincerely obey the Goſpel, and are truly influenced by the Spirit of it: a Conduct which, ſo far as any Rules of Life can effect it, muſt diſarm Malice itſelf, muſt reconcile the Friendſhip and Affections of Men to us, and not only give the Wicked no Provocation to hurt us, but in a great Meaſure diſable him from doing it. A general Eſteem is itſelf a real Protection. The Injuries offered to a good Man will be reſented with an univerſal Deteſtation, and every Man's Hand will be armed againſt the Offender.

The Protection of this Character will appear ſtill further, if we recollect that the moſt conſiderable Injuries we can receive, muſt be inflicted under ſome Colour of Juſtice, with the Pretence of executing publick Laws, or at leaſt within the Covert of them. For tho we ſhould ſuppoſe all Eſteem for Virtue, all Regards of Conſcience, to be put off by Men, yet even Malice itſelf will be under ſome Reſtraint from the Civil Laws of every Community, and not willingly expoſe itſelf to the Penalties of them. Now,

The Ends of Society require, that the Laws of eve-

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ry Community ſhould in general intend the Defence and Encouragement of thoſe that do well, and the Terror and Puniſhment of Evil-doers.

"Laws, (as the Apoſtle obſerves) are not made for the Righteous and Good, but for the lawleſs and unruly, for the Unjuſt and the Oppreſſor, for the Murderers of Fathers, and the Murderers of Mothers, for the Liar and the Perjured, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to ſound Doctrine." — But, againſt the Juſt and the Merciful, the Temperate and the Peaceable; "againſt ſuch there is no Law."

And conſequently, They who walk uprightly, and do the thing that is lawful and right, being Followers of that which is good, have not only the general Protection of Innocence, but act under the profeſſed Favour and Defence of all Laws; neither can they be brought under Cenſure from them, unleſs their Conduct be repreſented under ſome Character of Evil: an Attempt of ſome Difficulty, even to the ſubtileſt Malice, and which will not very often ſucceed, where the Action is perfectly conformable to the Rules of the Goſpel. Something or other will generally be found wanting, ſuch Prudence and Circumſpection at leaſt, ſuch Guard againſt Appearances as our Religion adviſes, where an innocent Perſon or Action is, in the ordinary Courſe of Juſtice, rendered ſubject to the Law.

Let us ſuppoſe the Caſe that the Civil Government ſhould diſfavour us as it did the firſt Chriſtians; Theſe muſt be acknowledged Circumſtances in which our Religion can give us the leaſt Protection; yet if we walk uprightly, and are Followers of That which is good, if we act up to the holy Rules we profeſs, if we obey our Superiors as far as our Religion directs, if we mind our own Buſineſs, confine ourſelves to the Duties of our Station, and be pure and peaceable as we are commanded to be, ſuch a Conduct muſt be attended with the utmoſt Security, that ſuch Circumſtances can poſſibly admit; we ſhall, in a great Meaſure, cut off all Occaſion, even from thoſe who ſeek Occaſion, that they may have whereof to accuſe us. And the moſt tyrannical Government muſt not only be without any juſt Offence from ſuch a Behaviour, but it muſt break through all the Rules on which the Happineſs of Society depends, and even act againſt its own true Intereſts, before it can harm us.

"Let not Mercy and Truth, therefore, forſake thee, bind them about thy Neck, and write them upon the Tables of thine Heart: ſo ſhalt thou find Favour & good Underſtanding in the Sight of God and Man."

From what has been ſuggeſted on this Head, it appears, (we preſume,) that a Conduct of Life agreeable to the Precepts of our Holy Religion, not only recom-

recommends us to the special Protection of God, but naturally engages the Friendship and Inclinations of Mankind to us, puts us under the Defence of a general Esteem, offers no Provocation to Malice itself, and very much restrains even its Power to hurt us, & consequently is our best Security against the Effects of it.

But a perfect Exemption from Injuries, the present Condition of human Life will not permit us to hope for; and therefore the Wise Man must not be here understood as affirming universally, and without Exception, that if we walk uprightly, it will thoroughly secure us. It was sufficient to his Purpose of recommending Innocence and Virtue as our wisest Choice, if the Rule generally holds; if Innocence is better guarded, and less exposed, & affords, upon the whole, a greater Security, than the most refined Expedients of secular Cunning can give us without it.

Unless the Assertion were thus limited, it could not be reconciled to those many Predictions of Christ and his Apostles, by which they prepared their Converts for Distress and Persecution from a prejudiced World, and would be refuted in the Example of their own most holy Life and bitter Sufferings.

In Prevention of all Mistakes, therefore, it will be proper to observe, — First,

That there always were, & ever will be, ſome Men ſo exceedingly wicked, ſo abandoned to their Luſts and Paſſions, as to break through all the Bounds of Gratitude, and even Nature itſelf, in Gratification of them; ſuch as Murderers of Fathers, and Murderers of Mothers; and from theſe the moſt venerable Innocence cannot always be a Protection.

2dly, That our good Actions will not always appear in their proper Character, notwithſtanding our greateſt Care. (*) A very good Man may want ſome Degrees of Prudence, and a very good Action ſome Circumſtances which may be neceſſary to place them in a due Light; and therefore it may not appear ſtrange to us if they are ſometimes miſtaken, and oppoſed even by Men, who are in general Lovers of thoſe who are good, and Friends to Virtue.

All moral Virtue, we know, conſiſts in a Medium, and is on either Side parted, as it were, but by a Line, from its oppoſite Vices; and when the Action approaches on either Side to the Line of Partition, it is eaſy

(*) All Sufferings, even of Men zealouſly religious, are not upon the Account of God and Religion.

If Men, thro Heat and falſe Zeal, factiouſly at any Time diſturb the Peace, the Order, and Quiet of their Country; if they ſeditiouſly oppoſe lawful Authority, and ſpread Doctrines inconſiſtent with Civil Government, or with good Manners, and have been puniſhed for ſo doing; This is not ſuffering for Virtue's Sake.

eaſy even for a good Man to miſtake it, and much eaſier for Malice to repreſent it as an Exceſs, and expoſe it to the Reproach and Penalties of a Tranſgreſſion. — We muſt reflect,

3dly, That no human Virtue is perfect, without a Mixture of ſome real Failings and Imperfections.

Surpriſe, Weakneſs, or Paſſion, will ſometimes betray the beſt of us into Actions not defenſible; and theſe we muſt always expect to be aggravated by the Enemies of Virtue, and repreſented to our greateſt Diſadvantage.

They are fond of leſſening the Diſparity of their own Character, and bringing the Virtuous down to a Level with themſelves; and therefore they never fail of objecting ſuch Defects in a good Man as a Proof of his Hypocriſy, that his Vices are really as great as their own, and only the more dangerous, for being covered under the Pretence of Virtue.

When we attend to theſe Reflections, we cannot be ſurpriſed if good Men and good Actions are ſometimes miſtaken, often miſrepreſented, and ſuffer what is only due to evil Actions and evil Doers.

Nay ſometimes it muſt be expected to happen, that Virtue itſelf may be the direct and immediate Occaſion of our Suffering.

We have before obſerved, that wicked Men have even by Principle and Conſtitution a ſecret Antipathy to good Men, by which they are prepared to do every thing that may leſſen their Eſteem, and render them vile and infamous in the Eyes of the World: and as Puniſhment is, in common Opinion, a Preſumption of Guilt, in the ſame Proportion that wicked Men are poſſeſſed of Power, good Men muſt expect to ſuffer. Their Virtue itſelf renders them offenſive to Men hardened in a contrary Diſpoſition; their Lives are a continual Reproach to Vice, and their Actions muſt often, in a Courſe of Duty, croſs the Schemes, and obſtruct the Deſigns of unrighteous Power. (*)

It

(*) It is obſerved, that when the beſt and moſt truly pious Men are hated and perſecuted, it is not becauſe Virtue itſelf is not always amiable, but becauſe the Perſecutors miſtake, thro' their own wicked Prejudices, and look upon the beſt of Men as profane and irreligious.

Of this Kind were all the Perſecutions of the beſt and pureſt Chriſtians in the primitive Times: It is certain theſe Men were eminently virtuous & religious, & it is as certain they ſuffered merely upon that Account; but then it is alſo as certain, that thoſe by whom they ſuffered, did not perſecute them becauſe they thought them religious, but becauſe they took them for Perſons moſt profane. They did not perſecute them becauſe they thought them to be Worſhippers of the true God, but becauſe they found them to be Deſpiſers of their falſe Ones. This made them implacably perſecute that Doctrine, the Evidence & Conviction, the Holineſs and Excellency of which, if they would have opened their Eyes, they could not poſſibly have reſiſted.

It is a common Remark of the Roman Hiſtorians, that under ſome of their bad Emperors, it was a dangerous thing to be virtuous, and that Men were forced to diſſemble their Merit, and diſtinguiſh themſelves by ſome faſhionable Vices, to avoid the Jealouſy and Reſentment of thoſe in Power: but This our Holy Religion will never permit us to do.

"If we thus pleaſe Men, we cannot alſo be the Servants of Chriſt." We are not at Liberty to decline the Obedience we owe to any one Command of God, in Compliance with the Paſſions of Men. And if the Duties of our Station require us to ſtand in the Gap, and oppoſe ourſelves to the Overflowing of Ungodlineſs, to ſuccour the injured, and appear in Defence of the oppreſſed, we are bound to act up to the Occaſion, though in every ſuch Caſe it is evident that our Religion and Virtue will be ſo far from a Protection to us, that it muſt provoke the utmoſt Reſentment from the Powers of the World, and derive the whole Storm of their Wrath upon our Heads.

Bleſſed be God, The fundamental Laws of our Conſtitution, and the Juſtice of our Government, ſecure us, as far as we are capable of being ſecured in this World, from all Apprehenſions of this Kind, and encourage us to hope that Innocence and Virtue, a

firm Adherence to the Faith and Duties of our Religion, cannot ſuffer among us under publick Reſentment, but through ſuch Miſtakes or Miſrepreſentations, as no human Policy can provide againſt.

But the Caſe before ſuppoſed is manifeſtly poſſible. The Sword of the Magiſtrate has been even intentionally drawn againſt Virtue and Religion, and therefore may be again: and ſhould we ſet this Caſe wholly aſide; yet when we conſider how often Public Juſtice, and the moſt upright Adminiſtration, will be impoſed on by invidious Suggeſtions, how impoſſible it is to guard againſt falſe Accuſations ſupported by Perjury, and that ſo long as Malice or Ambition, Envy or Revenge, are found among Mankind, Inſtances will not be wanting of theſe unrighteous Practices.

Another Reaſon likewiſe why the beſt of Men may be inſulted, is, becauſe it may happen to ſerve a preſent Intereſt of thoſe who oppreſs them: notwithſtanding that at the ſame Time it cannot be denied but in their Judgment and Conſcience they muſt honour and reſpect them.

This was plainly the Caſe, in the Condemnation of our Saviour. He was manifeſtly innocent of the Crimes laid to his Charge, and Pilate knew him to be

ſo;

ſo; but then, it is alſo manifeſt that he did not condemn him becauſe he was innocent, but becauſe he was willing to do the Jews a Pleaſure. Our Saviour's Innocence was ſufficient to convince the Mind of his Judge, and it was only Intereſt that prevailed over the Force of that Conviction. But,

Suppoſing none of theſe to be the Caſe; and that good Men are ſometimes perſecuted and hated for this very Reaſon only becauſe they are known to be ſuch; (which we think rarely happens:) yet ſtill, (as in all moral Maxims, it is ſufficient if they hold true for the greater Part,) yet ſtill, we ſay, Virtue is undoubtedly the moſt direct, the moſt certain and effectual Means that can be, to gain the Love and Favour of all Men, tho' poſſibly it may ſometimes fail of obtaining that Effect. (*)

"A ſoft Anſwer, (ſaith Solomon,) turneth away Wrath," and it is certain that it is the moſt probable Way to do it; tho there may, perhaps, be ſome Men in the World of ſo ill a Diſpoſition that they will rather

(*) It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, that notwithſtanding Religion, Men are but too apt to injure one another; but, would they not be much more ſo, was it not for this Check upon them, was it not for that Love, which our Religion ſo ſtrictly enjoins; which is a ſteady Principle of Peace and Union, that creates no Jealouſies, and excites no hurtful Paſſions, but appeaſeth them all, being all Candour, and Kindneſs, and good Offices to all Men. Serm. CCXVIII.

ther be inflamed than ſoftened by the genteleſt Entreaties. In like Manner it is viſible there may be, and it is too certain there have been and are ſome Perſons of ſo very ill a Spirit, that they will hate and perſecute a Righteous Man for no other Reaſon, but becauſe they know him to be ſo; and therefore it muſt not be affirmed that Religion and Piety will every where, at all Times, certainly and infallibly gain the Favour and Good-will of all Men, but only that it is the moſt probable and rational Means that can poſſibly be uſed to that End, and that in moſt Caſes it really does ſo, altho it will ſometimes prove otherwiſe.

For this Reaſon the Apoſtle, when he ſays "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of That which is good?" adds immediatly, "But, and if ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs' Sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled;" (i.e) if ye be truly virtuous and religious, it is probable, and you may reaſonably expect that Men will love and reſpect you; but if it ſhould happen otherwiſe, as it will ſometimes do; if you ſhould be hated and perſecuted for Righteouſneſs' Sake, let not this trouble or diſquiet you; indeed, rather think yourſelves happy, that you are accounted worthy to ſuffer for God, (i.e) for Virtue and Truth's Sake; who can and will deliver you in his good Time; if not in this World, will yet reward you abundantly in the next. Upon

Upon the Whole: This is the Comfort and Encouragement of all that truly embrace and practice Religion, that whilſt wicked Men, bent on Miſchief, ſuffer the juſt Reward of their Deeds, They have ſtill the Security of their own Well-doing, being engaged in thoſe Ways and Methods, which are the moſt proper, and do alſo moſt effectually conduce to their Safety.

Evil Doers may, and do certainly exclude themſelves from all the Benefits of Religion, and are juſtly expoſed to receive all the Injuries they create and are ſo forward to bring upon others. But Good Men feel all the Advantages and Comforts of it, and have exceeding great Reaſon to rejoice in its Protection. For, whilſt they follow the Directions which Religion gives them, for the Conduct of their Lives, and the Guide of their Actions, they cannot of themſelves greatly fall; and as to Others, they will be in no Manner of Temptation to injure them; For, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of That which is Good?"

Thus, as to This Life, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely." And!

As to Futurity! What other Preparation, or "Wherewith otherwiſe ſhall we come before the

"Lord, and bow ourſelves before the Moſt-High God? Shall we come before him with Burnt-Offerings, with Sacrifices of an Year Old? will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of Rams, or ten thouſand Rivers of Oil? or ſhall we give the Fruit of our Body for the Sin of our Souls? Behold! To obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams. He hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what is Good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, - to love Mercy, - and to walk humbly with thy God!"

Here then, the Advantage of Piety and Virtue, moſt eminently diſplays itſelf, in that, it doth not, after providing for our Accomodation in this inconſiderable Portion of our Exiſtence, leave us without any further Proſpect; but ſecures to us a Reverſion of Happineſs, complete enough to fill the Capacities, and to run commenſurate with the Duration of our immortal Souls.

This is undoubtedly the moſt incomparable, and by far the greateſt Advantage that redounds to Men from Religion; in Compariſon of which, all temporal Conſiderations are leſs than nothing, and lighter than Vanity itſelf.

The worldly Advantages that Religion brings to Men in this preſent Life are a ſenſible Recommendation

tion of Religion, even to the loweſt and meaneſt Spirits. — But,

To thoſe, who are raiſed above Senſe, and who aſpire after Immortality, who believe the perpetual Duration of their Souls, and the Reſurrection of their Bodies; To Theſe the Conſideration of a future Happineſs, and of thoſe unſpeakable and everlaſting Rewards which ſhall then be given to Holineſs and Virtue, is certainly the moſt powerful Motive and moſt likely to prevail with them: for, thoſe who are perſuaded that they ſhall continue forever, cannot otherwiſe but aſpire after a Happineſs commenſurate to their Duration; nor, can any thing that is conſcious to itſelf of its own Immortality be ſatisfied and contented with any thing leſs than the Hopes of an endleſs Felicity. And this Hope, Religion alone gives Men, and the Chriſtian Religion only can ſettle them in a firm and unſhaken Aſſurance of it.

And here we may venture to ſpeak to godly Men with the utmoſt Confidence, and to confine the Promiſe wholly to them, and to aſſure every ſuch Perſon of infallible Succeſs.

The good things of this Life, being but of ſmall Value, & of ſhort Continuance, are ſometimes denied to God's greateſt Favourites, and are, by the more

ſucceſsful among Theſe, ſhared in common with Perſons of a very different Character.

Our wiſe and gracious "Father, cauſeth his Sun to ſhine on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt;" But in the other World, the Caſe will be very different. At our Departure hence we ſhall find an "impaſſible Gulph fixed," a final Separation made, betwixt the oppoſite Parties, and whilſt God will "ſend Darkneſs upon the One, the Other will have Light in all their Dwellings." The good Man may meet with Diſappointments in this Life, but the Reward in the Life which is to come, is that better Part of the Promiſe made to Goodneſs, "which ſhall not be taken away from him."

The Enemies of a righteous Man cannot do him any real Harm, becauſe they cannot take from him any thing wherein his true and proper Happineſs conſiſts. His Happineſs conſiſts in imitating God, the Fountain and Spring of all Happineſs; and by copying out the divine Perfections in a holy Life, to become Partaker of the Divine Nature: Nor can any thing poſſibly make him miſerable, but what ſeparates him from the Favour and from the Likeneſs of God.

Chriſtians indeed are not Stoicks, nor can they be altogether inſenſible of what happens to them in this preſent

preſent Life; ſo that did they wholly depend on that Preſence of Mind, that Sufficiency which Virtue does of its own Nature furniſh the Soul with, it muſt after all be confeſſed, that the Troubles and Calamities of this Life, notwithſtanding all the Boaſts of vain-glorious Philoſophers, would be very grievous to them. But then, if all theſe Afflictions ſhall be abundantly recompenſed to them both in this World and the next, in this World generally and for the moſt Part, in the next univerſally and without Exception; if "there be no Man who hath left Father, or Mother, or Houſes, or Lands, for Chriſt's Sake, who ſhall not in this State receive not only Equivalents but an hundred-fold, and in the End eternal Life;" where then is the real Miſchief of theſe Loſſes? Perſecution may deprive ſuch Perſons of their preſent Poſſeſſions; but it cannot deſpoil them of thoſe "Bags that wax not old, that Treaſure laid up for them in Heaven, where Moth & Ruſt corrupt not, and where Thieves do not break through nor ſteal." It may deprive them of all the Comforts of this Life, and even Life itſelf; but it cannot hinder them of that eternal Inheritance, the joyful Expectation of which keeps them from being miſerable here, as the Enjoyment of it will make them forever happy hereafter. Whatever Loſs a good Man ſuſtains in this World upon the Account of his Concern for

Truth and Virtue, will be abundantly made-good to him in That which is to come; and conſequently it is ſo far from doing him any real Harm, that it ought rather to be accounted a Gain than a Loſs. "The Sufferings of this preſent Time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us; for our light Affliction, which endureth but for a Moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory."

What remains is briefly to apply what hath been ſaid. — And,

Firſt, We may obſerve, how highly we are indebted to God for our Religion, and withall what great Reaſon we have diligently to practice the ſame. We are not only to live in the Practice of our Duty upon the Faith and Hope of a FUTURE Reward; but we likewiſe receive a PRESENT Recompenſe of Honour, Peace, and Safety: ſo that, as long as we adhere to Truth and Goodneſs, we are ſafe, and THEN ONLY expoſe ourſelves to Miſchief, when we leave the good old Paths of Uprightneſs, and wander in the crooked Ways of Sin and Wickedneſs: "He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely; but he that perverteth his Steps ſhall be known." — Therefore,

2dly, From hence we may obſerve what great Matter

Matter of Comfort it muſt be to good Men, that while they "follow after Righteouſneſs," tho they live in the midſt of a wicked World, yet they have no Reaſon to be afraid of their Terrors, ſince their Virtues are their Security; Their Lives are ſuch, as do not only, not provoke Injuries, but directly tend to avert them; for, "ſo is the Will of God, that with Well-doing we ſhould put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men." — But,

The greateſt Comfort of all, is, that not only as to the periſhing things of This Life; but alſo as to the ever-durable Riches and Glories of Futurity, we are alſo hereby ſafe and ſecure: "Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having the Promiſe of the Life that now is, as well as That which is to come."

To Conclude, Let us but once make it plain and evident to the World, that we are truly and ſincerely good, and then we may ſafely truſt even a degenerate Age, in moſt Caſes, to do us Juſtice. Theſe Virtues (ſet in a clear Light) will charm the Eyes, and engage the Affections of all that behold us; will charm down Envy, and lay Fetters on Revenge, "will make our very Enemies to be at Peace with us, and provoke them to Love and to good Works."

And tho', in our preſent State, they cannot give us an abſolute Freedom from all Evil whatever, yet they

will always make this Odds on our Side, that whereas wicked Men are generally hated; We ſhall be as generally loved: — as Dangers attend them; We ſhall be ſecure: This will be always our Advantage and Comfort above the reſt of Mankind, that all good Men will rejoice to do us Good; and that moſt bad Men will be invited to do it; and that no Man, whether good or bad, will be under any Temptation to hurt us:

But above all, we ſhall hereby be ſecure of God for our Friend, who is able to do exceeding more abundantly for us than we can aſk or think," "in whoſe Preſence is Fullneſs of Joy, and at whoſe Right-hand there are Pleaſures for-ever-more."

Sermon

SERMON CCXIX.

The good Man ſupported by his Virtues.

(*)

Prov. xiv. 14, —— "A good Man ſhall be ſa-
"tisfied from himſelf."

The whole Verſe runs thus:

"The Backſlider in Heart ſhall be filled with his
"own Ways, but a good Man ſhall be ſatisfied
"from himſelf."

Theſe Words repreſent to us the different Tendency which virtuous and vicious Courſes naturally have, the One to Miſery, the Other to Happineſs.

"The Backſlider in Heart;" He that, to avoid a Danger, revolts from thoſe Virtuous Courſes which he knows he ought to have adhered to; ſhall ſurely feel Trouble, "He ſhall be filled with his own Ways." But

(*) This Subject, and the preceeding Diſcourſe, tho ſeemingly Digreſſions from the fixed Limits of this Work; yet are not ſo to be conſidered, but rather as Effects of, and Motives to the Virtues of Juſtice, Mercifulneſs, Honeſty, &c. as contained in this Vol.

But a truly good Man is, even in This, by far ſuperior to him, that though he ſhould ſuffer, yet his own Integrity, and the Clearneſs and Quietneſs of his Conſcience, give him abundant Satisfaction. By perſevering in virtuous Courſes, he has a Spring of Comfort ariſing from himſelf. "A good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf." — As the Backſlider in Heart ſhall feel the Effects of his own Folly, and be ruined by it; ſo, on the Contrary, a good Man ſhall likewiſe reap the Fruits of his Goodneſs; he too ſhall be filled with his own Ways, and "be ſatisfied from himſelf." This is what I intend for the Subject of the following Diſcourſe.

That Virtue is its own Reward, and is alone ſufficient to a happy Life, was an Opinion in great Eſteem among the ancient Philoſophers, eſpecially the Stoicks. And though they carried this Point too far, and advanced ſuch things in Favour of it, as were beyond the Reach of human Nature; yet it muſt be owned to be a glorious Notion, and that nothing can be ſaid greater in Behalf of Virtue.

And, there is ſo much Truth, as well as Goodneſs in it, that the Scriptures, which always make uſe of every Motive proper to work upon reaſonable Creatures, do frequently inſiſt upon it. Thus Solomon, "My Son, forget not my Law; but let thine Heart keep

"keep my Commandments, for Length of Days, and long Life, and Peace ſhall they add unto thee." And again, (when recommending the Practice of Virtue,) he tells us, That "Length of Days is in her Right-hand, and in her Left-hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, & all her Paths are Peace."

And in the New Teſtament, temporal Proſperity and Happineſs are frequently promiſed as a Reward to Virtue. "Bleſſed are the Meek, (ſays our Saviour) for they ſhall inherit the Earth," &c. And again, "Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you." And St. Paul tells us, That "Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having the Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come." All which, and many more Paſſages, amount to thus much at leaſt, That a virtuous Life is the beſt Courſe we can take to ſecure our Happineſs.

But the Philoſophers went much further in their Commendations of Virtue. They made their Wise, (i.e) their VIRTUOUS Man, not only regardleſs, but even inſenſible of every thing that concerned the Body and this Life. His Virtue was Proof againſt Want and Pain, and all the Miſeries and Afflictions which could befall the outward Man. But this was talking beyond the Reach of Human Nature; For the Man

that is in Poverty and Pain, that is afflicted in Body and Eſtate, let his Virtues be never ſo many and great, will be affected in his Mind too, and be far from being in a State of preſent Happineſs. He cannot help feeling his Pain, and being ſenſible of his Wants; and ſo far as he does This, ſo far is he miſerable.

And therefore Religion, "which is our reaſonable Service," and treats us like Men, does not require unreaſonable things of us, nor that we ſhould behave ourſelves above the Meaſures of our Nature. It does not pretend to make us inſenſible of Evils, nor prohibit the Uſe of all lawful Means to prevent or remove them. On the contrary, Religion lays the beſt Foundation for our Happineſs in this World, by preſcribing ſuch Rules, as, if we obſerve them, will enable us either to avoid theſe temporal Evils, or will ſupport us under them. So that ſuppoſing the Sinner and the Saint, the Wicked and the Righteous, to have the ſame Advantages with Reſpect to theſe outward things, to be in the ſame or the like Circumſtances, whether of Proſperity or Adverſity; the One will be, not only leſs miſerable, but much happier than the Other.

The "good Man" will have more Pleaſure in the good things of this Life, but leſs of the Evils than the Wicked. Beſides which, he hath Enjoyments peculiar to himſelf, which the Sinner is a perfect Stranger to;

to; and which will, in a great Meaſure, ſupply the Want of every thing elſe, and fully demonſtrate the Truth of the Text, That "A good Man is ſatisfied from himſelf."

In treating of theſe Words, I ſhall confine myſelf to the following Method:

Firſt, To give ſome ſhort Account, and general Character of "a good Man."

Secondly, To enlarge more particularly upon that INTERNAL Satisfaction which ariſes to him from the Contemplation of himſelf.

Thirdly, To point out ſome Times and Seaſons when this Contemplation of himſelf, or Reflection upon a virtuous Life, may be the greateſt Comfort and Support to him.

Concluding with ſome Inferences from the Whole.

Firſt, I am to give ſome ſhort Account and general Character of a "good Man."

"A good Man" is ſomething which fills the Mind with ſuch a lovely Idea, as makes every one fond of the Appellation, and ambitious of the Honour of it. A "good Man" has born up his Reputation in the worſt of Times, and maintained his Character, in Deſpite of Detraction. A "good Man" has been the Idol

of the People, as well as the Care of the Public; the Theme for the Poet to flouriſh, as well as the Orator to declaim upon. Every Sect and Profeſſion in the World have been willing to appropriate this honourable Badge to themſelves, and have fancied there was ſome peculiar Excellency in their own Party which muſt give them the Preference and Superiority over others. But, alas! the Virtues which conſtitute a "good Man," are no more to be confined to Sects and Parties than the Heat of the Sun to any particular Part of the World.

The Stoicks, of all the Philoſophers, have made the greateſt Pretences to the Rigour and Severity of Virtues, and beſtowed the higheſt Encomiums upon their wiſe or good Man. They have diveſted him of all Paſſion, to prove his Alliance to the Deity; and in ſome Caſes given him the Preference to the immortal Gods.

The Scriptures, (which make ſuch frequent Mention of a "good Man,") have recommended better Rules to attain to his Excellencies, than any of the moſt elaborate Writings of the Moraliſts ever could do: for though they do not ſet him off in all theſe wild Fancies, yet they aſcribe to him as much as is proper for a Mortal to receive, and give him the utmoſt Advantage which is conſiſtent with Sobriety and Rea-

ſon,

ſon. They place him indeed in a State of Dependence, and make him ſubſervient to his Almighty Sovereign; yet they furniſh him with the beſt Inſtructions to pleaſe his Maker here, and give him the Aſſurance to be like him hereafter: and, foraſmuch as the Divine Nature is moſt conſpicuous to this lower World in the Works of Mercy and Providence, and does more effectually command our Veneration, upon the Account of his Goodneſs and Liberality, than any other of his aſtoniſhing and unſearchable Attributes; we are to take the Dimenſions of a "good Man" as he copies after the Deity, and to conſider his Virtues more as they relate to Society, and are inſtrumental towards the Promotion of Piety and the Well-government of the World, than as they conſiſt in any intellectual Perfections, any recluſe or abſtracted Exerciſes of Devotion.

Our bleſſed Saviour, in his moſt incomparable Sermon on the Mount, directs us to univerſal Love and Charity, to Candor and Civility, in Order to be reputed the "Children of our Father which is in Heaven, who maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt." — Now,

If we take our Meaſures from this Standard, and endeavour to characterize a "good Man," we muſt

ſay that he is an Imitator of God, and a Lover of his Brethren, a Diſtinguiſher of the Virtues of good Men, and a Friend to the Perſons of bad Ones; free without Diſtinction, and generous without Pride; affable without Deſign, and condeſcending without Affectation; eaſy of Acceſs, and ready to communicate; merciful in his Temper, and unbiaſſed in his Favours; open in his Heart, and liberal with his Hand. If we conſider him as a Prince or a Subject, as a Parent or an Huſband, as a Neighbour or a Friend, as a Magiſtrate or a private Man, we ſhall find that one loving Principle runs through his whole Life, and gives Spirit and Activity to all his Undertakings. His Actions are not ſullied by Self-love, nor his Projects cramped by a narrow Genius. The good of the Public engroſſes his Thoughts, and the providing for others employs his Time. The Law of God is the Rule of his Conſcience, and the Service of his Country the Glory of his Life; his greateſt Care is to avoid Offence, and his ſole Want is an Object for his Charity. In a Word, — A "good Man" is One who is univerſally ſo; who keeps inflexibly to his Duty at all Times, and in all Inſtances whatever: the Man that is ſober and temperate, meek and humble, juſt and merciful; and all this upon Principles of Religion and Conſcience. And therefore as he behaves himſelf

ſelf thus towards his Neighbour and himſelf; ſo he will demean himſelf with all Piety and Devotion, Reverence, and Submiſſion towards God.

This is that "good Man" whoſe Praiſe is in this World, and whoſe Reward in another; whoſe Bounty is proclaimed by Babes and Sucklings, and whoſe Name is written in the Book of Life. This is that "good Man" for whom St. Paul tells us, "One would even dare to die;" whereas the righteous Man can lay claim to no ſuch Favour, nor can common Right and ſtrict Juſtice glory in the Performance of ſuch heroic Friendſhip.

I ſhall detain you no longer upon this general Subject than briefly ſum-up the Encomium, and give the finiſhing Strokes to the Character of a "good Man," in theſe lofty and pompous Expreſſions of the Son of Sirach; "He lived peaceably in his Habitation, and was honoured in his Generation, and became the Glory of the Times. Whereas ſome there be, which have no Memorial, who are periſhed as though they had never been born, and their Children after them; there is ſtill a good and a merciful Man, whoſe Righteouſneſs ſhall never be forgotten. With his Seed ſhall continually remain a good Inheritance, and his Children are within the Covenant. His Seed ſtands faſt, and his Children for his Sake. His Seed ſhall

remain for ever, and his Glory shall not be blotted out. His Body shall be buried in Peace, and his Name liveth for evermore." — But,

Secondly, I am to enlarge more particularly upon that INTERNAL Satisfaction which ariseth to "a good Man" from the Contemplation of "himself:" and this I shall endeavour to do,

1st. By considering this Satisfaction in its own Nature.

2dly. In Exclusion of worldly things. — And,

3dly. As it takes-in a Prospect of Futurity.

First, The Satisfaction which "a good Man" receives from "himself," in its own real Nature, may be defined to be nothing else but that Comfort and Pleasure which redounds to a Man, from the Reflection of his Mind upon a virtuous & religious Course of Life.

This Comfort and Pleasure is what comes generally recommended to us under the Character of a good Conscience, upon the Peace and Tranquility of which the Scriptures bestow such frequent and lofty Encomiums; and hath these Advantages attending it.

1st, A good Man is most likely to escape the Evils and Calamities of Life, and to pass thro' this World the freest from Troubles and Vexations.

2dly,

2dly, Whatever Calamities or Afflictions befall him, he is better able to bear them than other People.

3dly, He hath Pleaſures and Enjoyments peculiar to himſelf, which Others are Strangers to; and which will in a great Meaſure ſupply the Want of external Bleſſings, and make him "ſatisfied from himſelf."

1ſt. "A good Man" is moſt likely to eſcape the Evils and Calamities of Life, and to paſs through this World the freeſt from Troubles and Vexations. (*)

His Virtues will be a natural Defence & Security to him againſt many Evils & Miſeries, that would otherwiſe befall him. And though he muſt not expect to eſcape the common and unavoidable Accidents of Life, and to be above the Reach of thoſe Miſeries and Misfortunes which are the inſeparable Attendants of this imperfect State of things, and the very Condition of our being here; yet he will come off with leſs Hurt, and fare much better than other People.

For many, indeed moſt of thoſe things which imbitter human Life, and diſturb Men's Peace and Quiet, ariſe from their Faults or Follies, their unreaſonable Luſts and unruly Paſſions. Intemperance and Exceſs are deſtructive of the good Health and Conſtitution of our Bodies; they bring painful Diſeaſes and Sickneſs upon us; they cut ſhort our Days, or

(*) See the preceeding Diſcourſe, Serm. CCXIX.

or make Life a Burden to us. Malice and Ill-nature, Cruelty and Revenge, disturb the Calm and Repose of our Minds, and by That Means also impair the Health of our Bodies; and besides This they have an ill Influence upon our outward Circumstances; for they set Men against us, and make them our Enemies; they hinder and obstruct us in the Management of our Concerns, and make Business difficult; and bring many Wrongs and Injuries upon us, which we might easily have escaped, if we could but have governed our Passions, and been better natured. Covetousness and Ambition, besides the Inquietude of Mind which constantly attends them, bring innumerable Inconveniencies upon us, and are much more likely to ruin than to raise us. But the "good Man," who harbours none of these unruly Passions, nor gives-way to Humour and Fancy, Prejudice and Prepossession; but in all his Desires and Endeavours, keeps within those Bounds which Nature and Reason have fixed, and Religion has more fully established; will escape most of these Inconveniencies. — Besides,

He places his Happiness in the Favour of God, and in the Sense of his own Integrity; and is not so eager in any secular Projects and Designs, as to run himself into any Danger, or to ruin his own inward Peace and Quiet. He is not insensible of temporal Blessings,

Bleſſings, nor does he undervalue the good things of this Life: but then he does not overvalue them, nor is immoderate in his Purſuits of them. He deſires no more than what he wants; and he wants no more than what he can uſe and enjoy: and This reduces his Neceſſities to a narrow Compaſs.

He bears an univerſal Goodwill to all Mankind, and is always ready to do all the Good he can to others; and therefore is not likely to meet with ſo many Injuries, and ſo much Ill-treatment as they who are of the contrary Temper and Behaviour.

He is ſober and temperate in all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments; and this upon a Principle of Religion and Virtue; and therefore he is in a much fairer Way both to get and to keep thoſe two eſſential Ingredients of true Happineſs, a ſound Mind and a ſound Body, than they who ſet no Bounds to their Appetites and Paſſions.

Thus we ſee, "a good Man" does, by his Virtues, remove the chief Cauſes of Trouble and Diſquiet, & takes out of the Way the great Obſtacles and Impediments of Happineſs, ſince theſe ariſe from inordinate Affections and irregular Deſires, which it is the Buſineſs of Religion to govern and reſtrain.

So far, then, as the being free from Pain is one

Step to Pleaſure, and the avoiding Miſery is a good Beginning and Foundation of Happineſs; ſo far will "a good Man" be happy and "ſatisfied from himſelf."

This is the natural Effect of the Virtues he is poſſeſſed of, and will, for the moſt Part, be the Conſequence of them. — But, Should it be otherwiſe, then we obſerve,

2dly. That whatever Calamities or Afflictions befall "a good Man," he will bear them much better than other People.

As the Principles upon which he acts, keep him from running out into vain Expectations, and engaging in fruitleſs Attempts; ſo whenever he is diſappointed in his juſt Expectations, he can eaſily bear it. The Diſappointment will not be ſo great to him, who takes an Eſtimate of things, not from Fancy and Opinion, but from Truth and Reality, and the juſt Weight and Moment of them.

If he meets with Loſſes in his outward Circumſtances, and is deprived of a great Part of what he poſſeſſed; he will not be uneaſy, becauſe he knows that "the Happineſs of a Man's Life conſiſteth not in the Abundance of the things which he poſſeſſes;" and he will think the Remainder ſufficient for the Ends of Wiſdom and Virtue, ſufficient to ſatisfy Nature, and

to

to supply the Wants and Neceſſities, if not the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life.

If he be ſlighted and undervalued, ſlandered and reproached; he conſiders that Men are apt to miſtake, and that he knows himſelf more and better than others do; and therefore if the Ill that is reported of him be true he deſerves it, and will take care to amend, and to merit a better Character: If what he is charged with be falſe and groundleſs, it is their Faults and not his; and he cannot help it. It is what the beſt Men have been liable to, as well as he; and many Times the better they have been, the worſe Treatment have they met with in this Way. But nothing of this Kind can take away the Joy of a good Conſcience, or deprive him of the comfortable Teſtimony of his own Mind. And ſo long as he has This on his Side, and has nothing to accuſe himſelf of, "it is a ſmall thing with him to be judged of Men, or of Man's Judgment."

If he labours under Pain and Sickneſs, any bodily Diſtemper or Infirmity; This, though it cannot be denied to be an Evil, and inconſiſtent with a State of perfect Happineſs; yet it may be conſidered,

1ſt. That this, generally ſpeaking, is not ſo likely to befall good Men as others, becauſe Virtue is certainly an admirable Means of preſerving our Health, and will keep us free from many Pains and Diſeaſes,

which vitious and irregular Courſes expoſe Men to, either by being the firſt Cauſe and Occaſion of them, or by heightning and increaſing them when they proceed from other things. — And,

2dly, Where theſe things are unavoidable, and the common Lot of all Men; the virtuous Man will be leſs troubled and concerned, and feel leſs Pain from them than the Wicked. For he has all along been accuſtomed to Sobriety and Temperance, to Abſtinence and Self-denial; and theſe Virtues are good Preparatives for Hardſhips and Sufferings of any Kind. They gird up the Loins of our Mind, fortify our Souls, and fit them to meet with adverſe Fortune. Whereas the Man, who has given himſelf up to riotous Living, "whoſe God is his Belly," and who has always taken his Eaſe, and indulged in Softneſs and Senſuality, is, of all others, the moſt unfit for an afflicted State. Every Calamity and Misfortune will fall with a double Weight upon him; Pain, and Want, and Sickneſs, will make a deeper Impreſſion upon him, and pierce him to the Quick.

So that the Godly has much the Advantage of the Sinner in theſe Reſpects. Though his Virtues are not full Proof againſt the Strokes of Fortune, and cannot ward off every Blow, yet they will blunt the Edge of Afflictions, and greatly abate their Smart.

And

And in general, we may lay it down as an excellent Rule for the Conduct of our Lives, and the making ourſelves as happy as we can in this imperfect State; to conſider the Uncertainty of all theſe external Enjoyments, not to overvalue them, or ſet our Hearts too much upon them, or place our Happineſs in them; but to ſit as looſe as we can from this World, that ſo we may not be overwhelmed with Grief at any Loſs or Diſappointment we meet with.

This is a Leſſon which the good Man is perfect Maſter of, and whereby he will find Reſt to his Soul amidſt all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life. But the Wicked, who place all their Happineſs in this uncertain World, and value nothing but the things of this Life, will never want Matter of Trouble and Vexation. For,

What makes an Ambitious Man, who is furniſhed with all that a reaſonable Soul can deſire, diſcontented and uneaſy; but becauſe he is immoderately fond of Honour and Applauſe; becauſe he overvalues himſelf and his own Merits, and thinks that he is not ſufficiently taken notice of, and diſtinguiſhed? – Why is the Rich Man, who "has Goods laid up for many Years," many more than he can ever live to ſee, ſo ſolicitous to increaſe his Store, and ſo fearful of every little Loſs, but becauſe he is immoderately in Love

with this World, and the things that are in the World?

It were eaſy to ſhew this, of every other irregular Deſire, and inordinate Affection. And therefore the "good Man," whoſe Religion has taught him to moderate his Deſires, and to ſubdue every inordinate Paſſion, is above the Reach of theſe Diſturbances, and can eaſily bear That which other People cannot endure. He is already in the heavenly State; he is raiſed aloft, and ſees this World, and all that is in it, beneath his Feet, and can contentedly leave it to be enjoyed by thoſe who have no Reliſh for any thing better. To which purpoſe we obſerve.

3dly, That a good Man has Pleaſures and Enjoyments peculiar to himſelf, which other People are Strangers to, and which will, in a great Meaſure, ſupply the Want of external Bleſſings and "make him ſatisfied from himſelf."

The Precepts of Religion are, in themſelves, holy, juſt, and good; they are ſo ſuitable and agreeable to the Nature and Reaſon of Man, that we ought to obſerve and obey them upon their own Account, tho there was nothing to reward our Obedience, or to puniſh our Diſobedience. In this Senſe it is an undeniable Truth, that Virtue is its own Reward, and that Happineſs conſiſts in the very doing of virtuous

Actions.

Actions. (*) And therefore a wise Man is satisfied with the Conscience of Well-doing, and would not part with the Pleasure arising from hence upon any Account. He would not do any dishonest or wicked thing, to avoid any Suffering or Torment whatsoever. The Reason is, because God hath planted in our Nature an Aversion from Vice and Wickedness, and a Dislike to it. So that, if we resolutely adhere to that which is good, whatever we suffer for it; we satisfy our own Conscience, and rejoice with Joy unspeakable in having done so, and gain the Approbation and Applause both of God and Man.

Every One that has right Apprehensions of Good and Evil, cannot but receive great Satisfaction in avoiding the One, and following the Other. That Man will be infinitely happy in himself, and appear amiable in the Eyes of others, who keeps himself pure from all Contagion of the things of this Earth: who, when he beholds all the Kingdoms of this World, and

(*) When a Man considers himself as a Rational Creature, and endued with all those Abilities and Qualifications which place him above the Level of sublunary Beings, and next in Order to those immortal Spirits which wait upon the Throne of God; it can be no small Satisfaction to him that he hath maintained his Post, and quitted himself like a Man; that he has acted up to the Dignity of Human Nature, and employed his several Talents and Graces according to the Intent and Design of the Giver. Serm. CCXIX.

and the Glory of them is preſented to his View, yet he is not dazzled by it, nor drawn aſide from the Ways of Righteouſneſs, nor made to behave himſelf unworthily, in any Inſtance, or to tranſgreſs in his Duty towards God or Man. — And,

What a glorious Spectacle is he to God, as well as to Angels and Men, who encounters Dangers and grapples with Difficulties in the Diſcharge of his Duty; who bids Defiance to the Solicitations and Examples of the Men and Things of this World, and is able to get the better of them all? What Joy will ſuch a Victory as this raiſe in Heaven? And how fitly may God ſay of ſuch a Perſon, as he did of Job to Satan, "Haſt thou conſidered my Servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth; a perfect and an upright Man?" God ſeems to upbraid the Tempter, that he could not prevail againſt him.

And moſt certainly, it is admirable to behold ſuch an Object as this. We cannot chooſe but think it to be the moſt deſirable State and Condition, what will make us happy in ourſelves, and accepted with God. The Pleaſure which reſults from this Frame and Temper of Mind, from having kept our Innocence, and done the thing that is right, notwithſtanding all the Temptations to the contrary, is ſo far beyond any ſenſual Satisfactions and worldly Enjoyments, that when

when we have once raiſed it, we ſhall be unwilling to part with it upon any Account, and ſhall think nothing too much to be done to improve it.

Every good and virtuous Action we do, affords us a double Pleaſure. It firſt ſtrikes our Minds with a direct Pleaſure, by its Suitableneſs to our Nature; and then our Minds entertain themſelves with pleaſant Reflections upon it. The more we abound in ſuch Actions as theſe, the more true Pleaſure we enjoy; and no greater Happineſs on this ſide Heaven can be conceived, than a continued Courſe of ſuch Actions, (i.e) a Life of Religion and Virtue. This is That State and Temper of Mind, – That Peace and Joy, – That Tranquility and Security, wherein Heaven itſelf conſiſts. This is the proper Happineſs of Man, as he is a rational Creature; and is the ſame to the Soul, as Health and Strength are to the Body. Theſe increaſe its Vigour and Activity; they put it into the beſt and eaſieſt State, and ſet it at the greateſt Diſtance from all Trouble and Diſquiet.

So that though it cannot be denied that theſe outward things are God's Bleſſings, and were graciouſly deſigned to contribute to our Happineſs, yet ſtill Virtue is the main Ingredient; inſomuch that without it the whole World cannot make us happy; and with it a very ſmall Share of other things will ſuffice.

Suppoſe a Man in never ſo flouriſhing a Condition in his outward Circumſtances, yet, if he be deſtitute of Virtue; – if he has no Government of himſelf and his Paſſions; – if he runs out into the Exceſs of Riot; if he allows himſelf in Acts of Cruelty, Injuſtice, and Oppreſſion, or any other unlawful Courſes: he will have much inward Trouble and Diſquiet, many a melancholy Thought and Reflection. His Guilt will ſit heavy upon him, and the Divine Vengeance will hang continually over him, and "through Fear of Death, he will be all his Life-time ſubject unto Bondage."

But the Man that is conſcious to himſelf of his own Integrity, whoſe Heart does not reproach him; who, tho he is not perfectly innocent, (as "who is he that liveth and ſinneth not?") yet he is ſincere; has never offended of malicious Wickedneſs, nor been groſsly negligent of his Duty; but has made it his Buſineſs thro the whole Courſe of his Life, to "keep a Conſcience void of Offence, towards God and towards Man;" tho this Perſon be in a low and afflicted State, and his outward Condition is mean and miſerable, yet he has ſomething within him to ſupport him under it.

Tho' he is under outward Miſeries and Afflictions, yet he has the Satisfaction to feel that all is right and ſound within. He has the Pleaſure to conſider, that tho

tho' he hath not met with any great Succeſs in the World, yet he has kept himſelf unſpotted from it; and could never be prevailed upon to yield to any of its unlawful Embraces. He can recollect, with great Satisfaction, the many Conqueſts he has gained over Riches, Honours, and Senſuality; and how in all his Conflicts with Fleſh and Blood, his Reaſon has kept the Superiority, & his Faith has overcome the World. This is Matter of Triumph & Delight, and unſpeakable Satisfaction to him.

Nor is this all the Pleaſure we have from a virtuous Life. It fills us with ſtrong and lively Hopes, that, whatever our preſent Condition is, it will ſome Time or other go better with us. The truly "good Man" feels himſelf in ſuch an excellent Frame and State of Mind, that he knows certainly that this muſt be the State of God himſelf, and then he muſt love thoſe that are ſo like him. — Beſides,

When he conſiders himſelf as Part of the Univerſe, and not ſo much deſigned to carry on ſome ſecret Intrigues of his own, as born for the Good of the Public, and dedicated from the Womb to the Service of his Brethren; how charmed muſt he be with the very Thoughts of diſcharging theſe relative Duties faithfully, and acting uprightly in every reſpective Capacity,

city? (*) With what holy Indignation does he caſt his Eyes upon the Troubles and Devaſtations of this World, and look upon thoſe haughty Spirits who are hurried on with Bitterneſs and Rage, and are perpetually engaged in Broils and Contentions, and ſeem willing to leave the reproachful Monuments of their Cruelty and Revenge wherever they can. He is free from that Diſquietude and Remorſe which flows from ſuch inhuman and barbarous Actions; and his preſent Satisfaction is, that he has loved all Mankind more out of a Principle of Affinity than any Proſpect of Gain, and upon all Occaſions reſpected their Perſons, and bore with their Infirmities, ſolicited their Cauſe, and promoted their Intereſt, without the leaſt Favour or Partiality.

Theſe are the principal Inſtances of our Duty, upon the Performances of which we look back with Pleaſure and Delight, and are filled with ſuch Joy and Rapture as can be only known to a devout Soul, and is better felt than expreſſed. — But,

Secondly,

(*) When a Man conſiders the Obligations he lies under to his Maker, and the Right which accrues to God over the Works of his own Hands, by Virtue of Creation, Preſervation, and Redemption, he will find inexpreſſible Satisfaction in making ſome Returns to ſuch a beneficent God, and recommending himſelf to the Favour of the Almighty, by the Exerciſe of Faith and Affiance, and by the Acts of Obedience and Reſignation.

Secondly, I am to consider "a good Man's" internal Happiness, exclusive of all outward things.

Aristotle (the great Reasoner of Mankind) has long ago thought fit to range the Notion of Advantage under the three Heads, of Mind, Body, and Fortune; and though he has given the Preference to the former, and made it the principal Ingredient of Happiness, yet has he attributed something extraordinary and surprising to the two latter, and made them in a great Measure accessary to, and in some Sense complexive of Happiness. But,

This Doctine must be very well guarded, or else it will entrench upon the true Christian Greatness, and take off from the Honour and Dignity of Virtue: for if Health and Riches are any Ways necessary towards the Constitution of Happiness, the Consequence is unavoidable, that those who have the greatest Affluence of these Blessings are in the fairest Probability to be happy; but the Contrary to this Assertion is so apparent, that we oftentimes see Poverty and Disgrace in actual Possession of the Prize; and some truly Christian Virtues, (such as Hope, Assiance, and Resignation,) which bid the fairest for Happiness, to be only practicable in a low and abject State of Life.

It must be allowed that Condescension, Liberality, and Munificence, are supposed to be the Attendants of

an high Fortune, and the ſole Accompliſhments of the Rich and the Noble; but we ſhall find a common Error even in this Aſſertion, if we conſider that the fore-mentioned Virtues do not ſo much conſiſt in the Management of the Body, and the Gift of the Hand, as in the Diſpoſitions of the Soul, and the Willingneſs of the Mind.

To bring this Point to an Iſſue; – We are to conſider that the Chriſtian Law has placed all its Profeſſors in an equal Capacity of Happineſs; and, in Order to the Attainment of it, has confined their Deſires to Food and Raiment, and commanded them to be content with what is barely neceſſary, without coveting Superfluities. Nay, though the Divine Wiſdom ſhould think it expedient ſometimes to cut us ſhort in this Reſpect, and expoſe us to the Hardſhips of Hunger and Nakedneſs; we have no Reaſon to ſuppoſe our unfortunate Circumſtances any Impediment to our Virtue, but rather a Furtherance of it, becauſe they throw us more entirely on the divine Favour, and excite a more holy and devout Affiance on that Almighty Being, whoſe ſovereign Will has the ſole and abſolute Diſpoſal of us. The Advantage of Wealth and the Addition of Reſpect are only ſo far inſtrumental towards the Propagation of Virtue, as they render the outward Act the more remarkable,

and

and make the Circumſtances of the Agent beneficial to the Community: but in Reference to a Man's Self, Good and Evil are confined to the Mind, and have no real Communication with external Advantages. The Badge of Diſtinction is fixed upon another Place, and the honourable Denomination is taken from the Inward Realities. External Bleſſings are but of ſmall Importance, neither is the Largeneſs of a Man's Wealth or the Strength of the Conſtitution, any additional Security to a Mind truly ſeaſoned with Virtue and Holineſs. The Weight of Adverſity can never bend down the Soul, nor the Walls of a Priſon incloſe the Freedom of Thought. Caſualties can be no Surpriſe to an undaunted Reſolution; neither can Poverty or Reproach obſcure the Glories of Virtue. "A good Man" (ſays Seneca) "is happy within himſelf, and independent of Fortune, and his Virtue is to be ſeen through all Oppoſitions." And leſt this ſhould ſeem too much like a ſtoical Rant, the Son of Sirach has aſſured us to the ſame Purpoſe, "That whether a Man be rich or poor, if he have a good Heart towards the Lord, he ſhall always rejoice with a cheerful Countenance."

Thus is a "good Man," in a Chriſtian and divine, as well as a moral and philoſophical Acceptation of the Phraſe, truly "ſatisfied from himſelf."

But

But further yet, — Thirdly, Christianity gives a "good Man" more ample Satisfaction from a Prospect of a glorious Futurity, which, being founded upon the immutable Promise and Veracity of God, is of equal Validity and Support to the Soul, as if it were actually present. St. Peter makes use of this very Argument to comfort the Primitive Christians under their Persecutions, and tells them of "rejoicing greatly in the abundant Mercy of God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory."

Our Christian Religion was designed to assist us in this Valley of Tears, and, by the Certainty of an ensuing Reward, to encourage the Work assigned to us, to go on with Pleasure. As "we walk by Faith, and not by Sight," so we are comforted with a reversionary Bliss, and must make a future Expectance overbalance a present Calamity. The pious Soul is always filled with Rapture and Extasy; and though she be doomed to Flesh and Blood, and forced "to dwell with Mesek, and to have her Habitation among the Tents of Kedar," yet she scorns the sordid Acquaintance of the World, and maintains a Society and Conversation in Heaven. She opens the Window,

and enlarges the Proſpect; carries her Inquiries beyond the Body, and takes her Progreſs into another World; dwells upon the Contemplation of Eternity, and preſents herſelf with ſome Glimpſes and Anticipations of Paradiſe.

"O! then taſte, and ſee how gracious the Lord is. Walk with him and rejoice, becauſe your Names are written in Heaven."

Sermon

SERMON CCXX.

On the same Subject.

Particular Times and Seasons of it.

Prov. xiv. 14. "A good Man shall be satisfied "from himself."

A Desire of Ease is implanted in the very Make and Constitution of our Souls, and the Pursuit of Happiness is the constant Labour and Employment of our Lives. All our Searches and Enquiries are to find out Methods to better our present Condition, and all our Care and Solicitude is to redress the real or pretended Evils of human Life. Heaven and Earth are researched for the Seat of Happiness, and Contemplation is employed, and Schemes devised, to discover the Road to her Mansion-house. Nature is consulted, and Fortune caressed, to make us happy; Antiquity is called in to our Assistance, and the several Plans of Philosophy presented to us. The most hazardous Voyges are undertaken in Quest of this valuable Treasure, & the Products of remotest Countries imported, to complete our Felicity.

Yet,

Yet, notwithſtanding all this Labour of the Hand, and Vexation of the Spirit, the unfortunate Sons of Men are generally at a Loſs in their Searches after Happineſs; and, like a Traveller that miſtakes his Way at his firſt ſetting out, the further he advances, at the greater Diſtance he is from his Journey's End; the faſter he purſues, the faſter the Goddeſs flies from his Embraces; and when he dreams of Enjoyment, and amuſes himſelf with an imaginary Paradiſe, he is lulled in the Arms of Deſtruction, and ready to be ſwallowed up in the Gulph of Perdition. — Now,

The great Occaſion of all this Misfortune is principally to be imputed to ourſelves, and may be well reckoned the deplorable Effect of our Ignorance and Senſuality. We fail of the Attainment, becauſe we do not uſe right Meaſures in the Purſuit of Happineſs. Our Appetites and Affections are not duly regulated, nor our Thoughts employed upon their proper Objects. We are too eaſily diverted by Trifles, and impoſed upon with Counterfeits; too frequently miſled by Phantoms, and dazzled with Appearances. — Thus Man walks on in his own Vanity, and diſquiets himſelf in vain; courting Happineſs in various Ways, and yet ſtopped in his Courſe, or diſappointed in his Expectation every Moment! Our Fancy is ungovernable, and our Imagination unſet-

tled; we carry our Eye from ourſelves, and view the deſired Proſpect at a Diſtance: whereas our Curioſity ſhould be reſtrained, and all our Searches be confined within. The moſt material Diſcoveries are to be made from Ourſelves, and the Seat of Happineſs is in a Man's own Breaſt. (*) The quieting of our Paſſions and the Government of our Minds, the Exerciſe of our Reaſon, and the Diſcharge of Conſcience, the Practice of Virtue, and the avoiding of Vice, are the only Evidences of preſent Comfort, and the ſureſt Foundations for everlaſting Felicity.

"A good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf."

I have already given a ſhort Account and general Character of "a good Man," and made ſuch Deſcants as were proper upon that internal Satisfaction which ariſes to him from the Contemplation of "himſelf." I ſhall now proceed,

Thirdly, To point out ſome Times and Seaſons when this good Man's Contemplation of "himſelf," or Reflection upon a virtuous Life, may be the greateſt Comfort and Support to him. — And here,

Though Virtue is ſuch a Friend and Aſſiſtant as is always ready and at hand, and perpetually keeps the Soul in a pleaſant and cheerful Poſture, yet there are ſome

(*) *Nemo poteſt non beatiſſimus eſſe, qui eſt totus aptus ex ſeſe, quique in ſe tota ſua ponit omnia.* (Tull.)

ſome Occaſions which will try her Conſtancy; ſome Sealons that demand her more than ordinary Aſſiſtances. Upon ſuch Emergencies ſhe is never backward or timorous, but exerts her Vigours in Proportion to the Danger, and carries her Votaries through the moſt amazing Difficulties. When the Clouds gather, and the Storms ariſe, the Pilot betakes himſelf to the Helm, and ſteers his Courſe with an even Hand and by a ſteady Compaſs.

It may, therefore, perhaps, be worth our while to ſhift the Scene for a Moment, and to conſider the Sons of Men as involved in ſome remarkable Diſtreſſes, and to ſee how their Virtue will comfort and relieve them under all. — And,

Firſt, It will comfort them under a public Calamity. — Secondly, Under a private Affliction. — Thirdly, Under a falſe Accuſation. — Fourthly, In the Time of Sickneſs. — Fifthly, At the Hour of Death. — Sixthly, In the Day of Judgment — And,

Firſt, If we conſider a "good Man" in Relation to the Public, we ſhall find him beſt ſupported in all national Calamities, and moſt effectually relieved from the Inſults of the common Enemy, by the Aids and Aſſiſtances of his Virtues.

In the Deſtruction of Kingdoms it is obſervable, that the Fate of the Inhabitants is promiſcuous, and

that there can be no particular Diſtinction made between the Treatment of good and bad Men; but it is ſtill remarkable that, either before theſe national Judgments are brought upon a People, the wiſe Diſpoſer of Events has been frequently pleaſed to remove ſome ſelect Friends from approaching Danger, or elſe recommend them afterwards to the Mercy of their Conquerors in a foreign Land.

Of Both theſe Uſages we have frequent Inſtances in the Scriptures, and are preſented with ſuch Interpoſitions of Providence, in Favour of God's Saints and Servants, as may delight us with thoſe Principles, and make us emulous of thoſe Practices which have procured ſuch miraculous Protections and Deliverances. — For Inſtance,

We find Lot removed from the Deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the city Zoar preſerved for a Receptacle and Aſylum of that Preacher of Righteouſneſs, and his reſcued Family. — Again,

When Huldah had prophеſied the Fate of Jeruſalem, we read that King Joſiah was exempted from the common Calamity by his Tears and Repentance, and was to be prevented by a friendly Death from beholding the Ravage of his Dominions, and the Slaughter of his Subjects: "Becauſe thine Heart was tender, (ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael,) and thou didſt

humble

humble thyſelf before God, when thou heardſt his Words againſt this Place, and againſt the Inhabitants thereof, and humbleſt thyſelf before me, and didſt rent thy Clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee alſo, ſaith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy Fathers, and thou ſhalt be gathered to thy Grave in Peace, neither ſhall thine Eyes ſee all the Evil that I will bring upon this Place, and upon the Inhabitants of the ſame."

After this terrible Judgment was completed, and the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, we find the merciful Providence of God attending his faithful Servants in Exile; and the Virtues of Daniel and his Adherents diſtinguiſhed and rewarded by the eaſtern Monarchs, and the Patience and Piety of Ezra and Nehemiah finally crowned with a glorious Reſtoration. — But,

However the Caſe may happen in Reſpect of particular Providences, or ſuppoſing, at preſent, that a good Man ſhould be Partaker with his Brethren in any common or natural Calamities; yet, foraſmuch as his Virtues have made him a loyal Subject and a faithful Citizen, we ſhall find him under no Concern on this Account. In the Height "of Wars and Rumours of Wars," and in the midſt of the "Diſtreſs and Perplexity of Nations, when Men's Hearts

fail them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe things which are coming on the Earth;" a good Man's Fortitude is conſpicuous, his Expectations are enlarged, and his Hopes extend to Futurity. He has been wiſe to true and laſting Purpoſes, and made a timely Security of the better Part; ſo that his Heart is invulnerable, his Treaſure is guarded, and no Breach or Inroad can be made upon his Conſcience, without his own Conſent and Approbation. The Peace of Mind is not to be moleſted by Sword and Famine, and Virtue is a Treaſure never to be injured by Captivity. Of This we have ſeveral Inſtances in the Prophets and wiſe Men of Antiquity, whoſe Faith and Conſtancy followed them into Exile, and ſupported them in a foreign Land. Some of theſe illuſtrious Perſons I have already mentioned, I ſhall therefore only add to their Number, what Tully has memorably recorded in Praiſe of a good Man, (*) [viz] "That he could not ſo much derogate from the Virtues of "ſuch an Hero, as to think him diſturbed, unhappy, "or miſerable, in the midſt of the Carthaginian Tor-"ture. For the Greatneſs of his Soul was not to be "leſſened by the Exquiſiteneſs of his Pain, neither did "his Gravity or Fidelity, his Conſtancy or his Cou-"rage, ſuffer any Eclipſe in his Adverſity: for his "Mind being guarded by Virtue could not be ſubject

(*) Marcus Regulus. "to

as to any outward Assault; and though the Body was in Durance, the Soul still preserved her native Freedom." — But,

Secondly, A good Man's Virtue relieves him under a private Affliction. (*)

By a private Affliction, we mean any Disaster which may befal a Man in his single Capacity or private Station of Life, such as the Misfortune of his Family, the Impairing of his Health, the Diminution of his Estate, or the Loss of his good Name. In most of these Respects we find Job attacked, when his Territories were ravaged by the Sabeans, and his Servants slain with the Edge of the Sword; when his Houses and Goods were demolished, and his Sons and Daughters buried in the Ruins of them; when Messengers upon messengers brought him the fatal Tidings, and every Report was aggravated with some more astonishing and distressful Circumstance: yet, for all This, the Man of Patience kept his Temper and Integrity, and made no other Reply to the Dispensations of Pro-

(*) Tho' no Man can acquit himself, or be justified before God, as to the perfect Innocence of his Life; yet, as to the general Course and Tenor of an unblamable Life, a good Man may appeal to God, and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him, not as an angry and revengeful Judge, but as a tender & compassionate Father; who corrects us, not for his Pleasure, but for our Profit, that we might be Partakers together with Him of our Hope. Serm. CCXX.

Providence, but, "Naked came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked ſhall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the Lord.—In all this Job ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly." In all This the perfect and upright Man ſtood equally poiſed by his Virtues, and did not lean either to the Right-hand or the Left, by any angry Remonſtrances or weak Complaints.—Now,

Againſt the like unfortunate Accidents, the ſame Succours and Support are ſtill adminiſtered to good Men; the ſame unſpotted Conſcience and unſhaken Piety will cope with Dangers and ſurmount Diſtreſſes. Patience has armed a good Man againſt Croſſes and Diſappointments, and Reſignation has diſpoſed him for any Changes or Viciſſitudes of Fortune: Affiance in Providence has ſweetened the bitter Cup of Adverſity, and Faith in God's Promiſes made even Perſecution and Martyrdom to be embraced with Joy and Thankſgiving. O triumphant Innocence! O impregnable Virtue!—Look but once more upon this ſuffering and afflicted Hero! See, how this "ſtedfaſt and unmoveable" Man paſſes through the "Valley of Tears" with Cheerfulneſs and Intrepidity; facing every Storm with Reſolution, bearing every Shock with Wiſdom, and improving every Loſs to Advantage! When the Winds begin to riſe, and the Waves

to roar; when "Fearfulneſs and Trembling come upon the Sinner, and an horrible Dread overwhelms" the guilty, "a good Man" can retire peaceably into his own Breaſt, and find the greateſt Calm and Serenity within himſelf. He is not galled with the Conſciouſneſs of any ſinful Miſdemeanor, nor are his Looks pallid, or his Countenance diſordered, by any ſecret Rebukes from within.

"A good Man," a Man that has a Conſcience void of Offence; a Man that is at Peace with God, with himſelf, and, as much as in him lies, with all the World, what hath he to fear, or what can interrupt the free and even Current of his Enjoyments? This Man's Heart "in the midſt of Sadneſs, (if we may ſo term any outward Misfortune or Calamity that befalls him,) is cheerful."

Thirdly, A good Man's Virtue relieves him under a falſe Accuſation. This was never more remarkable than in the Lives and Actions of the primitive Chriſtians, who, by the Strength of their Piety, bore up againſt the Malice of Jews and Gentiles; and cleared themſelves from the Imputation of Atheiſm and Diſloyalty, from being Diſturbers of the public Peace, and "Setters forth of ſtrange Doctrines;" by a ſolemn Appeal to the Tribunal of their own Conſcience.

Whoever looks into the Apologies and Writings of the Fathers, will find Abundance of Arguments to this Purpoſe; but becauſe theſe Labours are not the Subject of every one's Meditation, I ſhall prove this from an Inſtance or two in St. Paul's Life.

When this great Apoſtle was accuſed at Jeruſalem for Riot and Sedition, he tells his Countrymen and the Roman Governor, that "he had lived in all good Conſcience before God until that Day."

When Tertullus renewed the ſame Charge of Tumult and Hereſy againſt him, he had Recourſe to the ſame Topick for an Anſwer: "Herein (ſays he) do I exerciſe myſelf, to have always a Conſcience void of Offence, towards God and towards Man." This was an Argument beyond Denial, a Proof too ſtrong for Confutation; the beſt Evidence to ſupport the Courage of the Priſoner, and the moſt laſting Support under Fetters and Confinement. What unſpeakable Comfort muſt flow from a generous and undaunted Appeal to the Knowledge of the whole World for the Manner and Courſe of our Life; What Extaſy of Rejoicing muſt ariſe from the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, "that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleſhly Wiſdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Converſation in this World?"

If we can but approve our Conſciences before God, the uncharitable Cenſures of Men are not much to be regarded by us: ſome Impreſſion they will make upon tender Minds; but we muſt by no Means let them ſink deep into our Spirits: "If our Hearts condemn us not, we may have Confidence towards God; and then ſurely, much more towards Men." If God and our own Conſciences do but acquit us, ſurely the Slanders and hard Cenſures of Men can be of no great Importance, and therefore ſhould not diſturb us.

Then, fret not thyſelf, O my Soul, at the Contrivances of evil Doers; nor be thou full of Heavineſs and diſquieted within me, when falſe Witneſſes riſe up againſt thee, and lay to thy Charge things which thou knoweſt not. Let Malice ſtorm, and Cenſure rail; let Informations be lodged, and buſy Sycophants encouraged; do thou look higher than an idle Story or an officious Lie; do thou form a better Intereſt, when Envy would traduce and Power cruſh thee: contract a more honourable Relation, and ſecure a more laſting Friendſhip, that, when thy Father and thy Mother forſake thee, and thy Kindred and Acquaintance would break off their Correſpondence, and betray the moſt ſacred Truſts for ſome mercenary Deſigns of their own, the Lord may take us up.

Fourthly, The Contemplation of a good Man's

Life is the beſt Support in the Time of Sickneſs.

Altho Man be encompaſſed with Infirmities, and hourly threatened with Death, yet the Attacks of Sickneſs are an uncommon Surpriſe, and the Management of ſick Perſons is ſomething peculiar. Friends are alarmed and in Confuſion, and Medicines applied; but theſe oftentimes can be of little Efficacy to a guilty Mind. "It is neither Herb, nor mollifying Ointment, that reſtoreth to Health," but the Infuſions of Grace which ſtrengthen the Heart, and the Power of "thy Word, O Lord, which healeth all things."

Not that we would inſinuate by theſe Suggeſtions, that Man is to dwell upon Miracles, or that Religion ſhould introduce ſuch a ſtoical Apathy, as totally to extinguiſh the Senſe of Pain: but we are ſtill confident that it teaches Men the beſt Arts of Management under Sickneſs, and inſtructs them in the true Wiſdom of Patience to bear their Lot with Contentment and Reſignation.

Human Nature, both as to outward Impreſſions and inward Senſations, may be the ſame in good and bad Men; but Grace ſweetens the Diſpoſitions and cools the Paſſions of the one, whilſt Guilt adds a Pungency and Acuteneſs to Pain, and is the greateſt Sting and Terror of a Diſeaſe in the other.

View theſe two Perſons upon the Bed of Languiſhing,

ing, and ſee the Difference of their Conduct and Deportment, according to the Variety of their Actions in their paſt Life. The wicked Man can neither look backward without Remorſe, nor forward without Horror. All his Wiſhes are for a Recovery from Sickneſs, and all his Applications are for the ſtupifying of his Conſcience, or the Removal of his bodily Tortures. But a good Man ſurmounts his Diſeaſe by ſpiritual Contemplations, balances his preſent Pain by the comfortable Reflections upon a virtuous Life; and fences againſt Futurity by the Promiſes of God and the Merits of his Redeemer. — This brings me,

Fifthly, To conſider how the Contemplation of a good Life may be the beſt Support to us at the Hour of Death.

Thoſe are very excellent and ſeaſonable Petitions of our Church, that the more the outward Man decayeth, God would ſtrengthen us ſo much the more continually with his Grace and holy Spirit in the inner Man; and would not ſuffer us at our laſt Hour, for any Pain of Death, to fall from him: that his almighty and over-ruling Goodneſs would not permit the Violence of Diſtemper, or the Shocks of Death, to looſen our Faith or break-off our Alliance with him. This Scene, which is antecedent to our Diſſolution, is full of Hurry, Anguiſh, Aſtoniſhment, and Confuſion;

the Fleſh being then in a particular Manner weak, and the Agonies, for any thing we know, very ſtrong. The bare Pain of dying may not be ſo much as the fearful looking-for of Judgment, and the Diſpoſal of our better Part in a future State. It is Virtue only can bear us through theſe Dangers, and be our ſtrongeſt Security in theſe laſt Moments. If the Soul has made Proviſion againſt the Time of Need, by fortifying the inward Man, ſhe is in a ready Poſture of Defence, and can maintain her Ground in Defiance of the Enemy. Thoſe accidental Aſſiſtances which are adminiſtered to ſick and depraved Minds by the Advice of their Spiritual Paſtors, or the charitable Prayers of the Church, are not of themſelves ſufficient, without any previous Diſpoſitions, to carry a Man through the fiery Trial: "like Seed ſown upon ſtony Ground, for Want of Depth, they are ſoon ſcorched up, and withered by the violent Heat of the Sun." When Perſecutions or Afflictions ariſe, wavering and uncertain Men are immediately offended; but when Virtue has by a long Exerciſe been cultivated and improved, rooted and habituated to the Soul, her Strength will be proportioned to any Danger, and the Succours of Grace will come timely in, to the Aſſiſtances of weakened Nature.

What Comfort will it be to us, when our laſt Hour ap-

approaches, to be able to ſay with good Hezekiah, "Remember now, O Lord, I beſeech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which is good in thy Sight."

With what Extaſy, and Triumph, and Greatneſs of Mind doth St. Paul ſpeak in this Caſe! "I am now (ſays he) ready to be offered up, and the Time of my Departure is at hand; I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, ſhall give me at That Day: and not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his Appearing." — But,

Laſtly, From Sickneſs and Death, let us paſs to the Reſurrection, and the Day of Judgment.

In the Day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt, We and the whole World muſt be tried before him for our Actions done in the Body, whether good or evil, and be acquitted or condemned according as our Conſciences do then bear-witneſs for, or againſt us. Moſt certainly ſuch a Reflexion, duly improved, would never ſuffer us to take any Eaſe or Repoſe in our own Mind, till we had, with the Apoſtle, exerciſed ourſelves to "have always a Conſcience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man: for, Who can bear the coming of his Judge

in the Clouds from the Right-hand of Power, without calling upon the Mountains to fall upon him, and the Hills to cover him?" — But,

"Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright!" for he, he only, has Courage to ſuſtain this Shock; he only has Strength for this laſt Rencounter; he only has Virtues to ſecure the Victory. There is nothing in Judgment can be terrible to him, who has the beſt Aſſurances and the moſt rational Satisfaction from himſelf. When the Trumpet ſhall ſound, and the Dead ſhall be raiſed; when the Judge ſhall appear, and the book of Fate ſhall be opened, and the "Secrets of all Hearts diſcloſed;" "then ſhall the righteous Man ſtand in great Boldneſs before the Face of ſuch as have afflicted him, and made no Account of his Labours. when they ſee it they ſhall be troubled with terrible Fear, and ſhall be amazed at the Strangeneſs of his Salvation, ſo far beyond all they looked for." "When they caſt up the Account of their own Sins, they ſhall come with Fear, and their own Iniquities ſhall convince them to the Face." But Piety ſhall appear with a different Aſpect, and Innocence provoke the modeſt Scrutiny and Inſpection. "Every One that does Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reproved. But he that doth Truth, cometh to the Light, that his

Deeds may be made manifeſt that they are wrought in God." — Now,

It is a future Judgment muſt place things in a true Light, adjuſt the Irregularities of this partial World; and then ſhall Religion creep from her Retirement, and private Charity be proclaimed before Men and Angels; then ſhall Modeſty be emboldened, and Humility exalted; Faith ſhall triumph, and Hope be ſwallowed up in Fruition.

O happy Man, "enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord," and dwell upon the Contemplation of thy Virtues to all Eternity. Fools may have thy Faſting in Deriſion, and make thy Devotion a Proverb of Reproach; but how groundleſs are their Cenſures, and how ridiculous their Raillery! "We Fools accounted his Life Madneſs, & his End to be without Honour; but how art thou numbered among the Children of God, and thy Lot is among the Saints!" For, "tho' the Righteous be prevented with Death, yet ſhall he be in Reſt: for the Memorial of Virtue is immortal; becauſe it is known with God and with Men; when it is preſent, good Men will take Example at it; and when it is gone, they deſire it: it weareth a Crown, and triumpheth for ever, having gotten the Victory, ſtriving for undefiled Rewards."

From what has been ſaid upon this Argument, it appears, (Serm. CCXX.) Firſt,

First, How unjuſt That Reproach is, which is caſt upon Religion and Virtue, that they deprive us of all Joy and Comfort of our Lives, all Delights and Satisfaction, and fill us with Melancholy and Sadneſs of Heart; and that when once we enter upon a religious Courſe of Life, we muſt bid adieu to all the Pleaſures of this World, and ſigh and weep out the Remainder of our Days.

That This is an untrue and groundleſs Charge, they well know, who are acquainted with the Ways of Piety and Virtue, and have experienced the Pleaſure and Satisfaction ariſing from them. The Practice of Religion and Virtue is agreeable to the Nature and Inclinations of good Men. Every good and virtuous Action is as grateful & pleaſing to a good Man, as Meat is to the Hungry, and Drink to the Thirſty. It is as great a Satisfaction to his rational Inclinations, as they are to his ſenſual Appetites. "My Meat, (ſays our bleſſed Saviour,) is to do the Will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his Work." To the ſame Purpoſe is that of holy Job "Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lips; I have eſteemed the Words of his Mouth, more than my neceſſary Food."

Delight and Pleaſure, inward Contentment and Satisfaction of Mind, Peace and Tranquillity of Soul,

are the inſeparable Attendants of religious and virtuous Actions, and do naturally follow the Fear of God, and the keeping his Commandments. When a Man has done his Duty and ſpent his Time well, he can reflect upon his Doing with Comfort. He is not afraid to review his paſt Life, and to call himſelf to an Account for what he has done. And This is a never-failing Spring of Comfort. But this Joy is peculiar to the Righteous, and This joyful Gladneſs is for none but ſuch as are upright in Heart. It is a Pleaſure which the Wicked are Strangers to, and which Sinners can never pretend to partake of.

And, for the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of this Life, God has not forbid us the Uſe and Participation of them; but has commanded it, as far as it is agreeable to Reaſon, and to our true Intereſt. Religion does not prohibit any thing elſe but our Exceſſes in the Uſe of thoſe things, and prevents our Follies and Miſtakes about them, and teaches us ſo to regulate ourſelves in all our Enjoyments here, as to heighten our Pleaſures, and make them more truly deſerving that Name. — And therefore,

Secondly, Hence we ſee the Reaſon why ſo many who profeſs Religion, and are ſincere in their Profeſſion, yet paſs their Days ſo uncomfortably, perpetually uneaſy and diſquieted, and reap ſo little Joy and

Comfort from their Religion. All this ariſes from their Miſtakes about Religion, and placing it either in things which do not belong to it, or which are not the main and eſſential Ingredients of it, the things wherein the Life and Power of it conſiſt.

Sometimes Religion is diſtinguiſhed from Virtue, and preferred before it: and then it is no Wonder that Men feel no Pleaſure in their Religion, when it is deſtitute of Virtue, which is the only thing that is valuable in Religion, and that carries its own Reward along with it. Much leſs can it be wondered, that They find no real Satisfaction in their Religion, who place it all in external Forms and Modes of Worſhip, and take up with the inſtrumental Parts of it, in a conſtant Round and Succeſſion of outward Obſervances, and Performances, without any Regard to the true End and Deſign of theſe Appointments, (i.e) to make the Comers thereunto really better. For this is the true Meaſure and Standard of Religion, the Good Effect it has upon us. If our Religion does not make us really better, we cannot expect to be the happier for it. Theſe Two will keep an exact Proportion; and though we may poſſibly quiet ourſelves a little for the preſent, without any real Amendment or Improvement; this is but a falſe Peace, and it will be in the Power of every little croſs Accident to break it. — Again, Some

Some Men miſtake Superſtition for Religion; and This, inſtead of quieting their Conſciences, fills them with endleſs Fears and Scruples, and puts them upon ſuch Practices as God never required at their Hands, and which are, in their own Nature, more likely to provoke, than to pleaſe, his Divine Majeſty.

Others place Religion in Melancholy and Dejection, - in ſequeſtering themſelves from the World, - in bodily Exerciſe, and voluntary Acts of Abſtinence & Self-denial, in the moſt lawful and innocent Matters: in impoſing Hardſhips and Severities upon themſelves, in literally mortifying the Body, - and crucifying the Fleſh; like the Worſhippers of Baal, who "cut themſelves after their Manner, with Knives and Lancets, till the Blood guſhed out upon them," As if God was a cruel and revengeful Being, who envied the Happineſs of his Creatures, and took Delight in their Miſery and Torment.

Whereas it is certain that he wills the Happineſs of Mankind, and therefore enjoins them Holineſs, becauſe That is the only Way to Happineſs, as it is the only Way whereby we can reſemble Him, who is the Fountain of Happineſs. — And therefore,

Since all theſe Severities may be undergone, without mortifying any One Luſt or Paſſion, without advancing One Step in real Goodneſs; - ſince Men may

deal thus ſeverely by themſelves, and yet be cruel and revengeful to Others; – ſince they may undergo all this Penance, and yet be as malicious and cenſorious, as proud and covetous, as ſenſual and worldly as ever; they cannot expect that This ſhould make any Acceſſion to their Happineſs, which adds nothing to their Virtues, or that they ſhould feel any of the Effects of Religion, when they are deſtitute of the Thing itſelf; and therefore, of the Power of it.

Thirdly and laſtly, From the Whole we may diſcern the true Cauſe of That Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, That Trouble and Uneaſineſs, That Labour and Sorrow which is to be found under the Sun.

When we look abroad into the World we find all Places full of Diſcontents and Complaints. They abound in the City and in the Country: neither Solitude nor Society can exclude them, nor any State and Condition of Life can exempt us from them. They aſcend the Thrones of Princes, and viſit the Palaces of the Nobles, and creep into the Cottages of the Poor; and like Death itſelf, are equally incident to Men of every Rank. But whence does This proceed? Is Man born to all this Trouble? Is it entailed upon him by the great Author of his Being, and is there no avoiding it? How then ſhall we vindicate the Goodneſs of God in making Man? for if Theſe

Vexations

Vexations be fatal & inevitable, moſt true is that Saying, "That it is better to die than live; and he who is not yet born, is in a better Condition than either."

But if there be any Truth in the foregoing Diſcourſe, if "a good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf;" this will juſtify our great Creator, by ſhewing us, that the true Reaſon why there is ſo little Satisfaction and Contentment, and ſo much Diſſatisfaction and Diſcontent to be found in the World, is becauſe there is ſo little Goodneſs, ſo little of true Religion and Virtue among us.

That there are many inevitable Occaſions of Trouble and Diſquiet, cannot be denied; that Poverty and Want, that Pain and Sickneſs, are Evils, and ſo many Hindrances and Impediments to Happineſs, cannot be queſtioned by any Man who is in his Senſes. But then, Why are THEY ſo unhappy who are free from theſe things? what is the Ruſt that corrupts the Treaſures of the Rich; what is the Worm that preys upon the Gourd of the Wealthy, and makes it wither? in a Word, what is it, that makes thoſe inwardly uneaſy and diſcontented, who are outwardly proſperous and happy? What is this, but the Want of true Virtue and Goodneſs, and that inward Self-ſatisfaction and Contentment which ariſes from thence? The Want of this Comfort and Support makes thoſe

Afflictions and Miseries which we meet with in this transitory World set so heavy upon us, and sinks us under them.

The Conclusion therefore of the whole Matter is This: that to "Fear God and keep his Commandments, is the Whole of Man;" is the best Preservative against the Evils of this Life, and the only Security from the Miseries of the next.

Sermon

SERMON CCXXI.

The great Importance of maintaining Character.

Luke xiv. 34. "Salt is good: but if the Salt have "loſt its Savour, wherewith ſhall it be ſeaſoned?"

The many beautiful Similies wherewith Chriſt here, and in parallel Texts in Scripture, addreſſes his Diſciples, are what peculiarly draw our Attention to the Conſideration of them. "Ye are the Salt of the Earth." "Ye are the Light of the World." — "A City ſet on "an Hill cannot be hid." (*) But,

(*) From knowing much proceeds the admirable Variety and Novelty of Metaphors, Similitudes, &c. which are not to be met-with in the Compaſs of a narrow Knowledge. They mightily ſtrengthen and beautify a Diſcourſe. In great Subjects, when they are made from leſſer things, they relieve and refreſh the Mind, that had been long kept upon the Stretch of cloſe Attention. And when ſtrong and ſublime, they heighten and improve a meaner Subject.

It is from the Uſefulneſs and Beauty of theſe, that Perſons of weak Judgments and idle Fancy run out ſo perpetually upon Similitudes, confounding their Subjects by the Multitude of Likeneſſes, & making it like ſo many things, that, in Fact, it is like nothing at all. *Tam ſimile, quod eſt diſſimillimum.*

In running into minute Circumſtances, beſides the Tediouſneſs, there

But, it is not my Intention to ſpeak to them in This View, as directed immediately to the Diſciples of our Lord (i.e) as we muſt underſtand them at the preſent Day, their Succeſſors in Office – whoſe Power and Abilities rather enable them to give Inſtruction, than need any; – but, (encouraged by the ſame great Teacher of our Faith,) to extend them at LARGE, for the Improvement of the general Practice of Mankind; for ſo we are allowed from the extenſive Addreſs immediately following the Text – "He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear;" – and, in another Place, – after as particular an Injunction to his IMMEDIATE Attendants, on the great Duties of Watchfulneſs, Prayer, and Perſeverance,

there is Danger of diſcovering ſome unagreeable Proportion - Not ſo, the divine Inſtruction of our Bleſſed Lord, the Propriety of whoſe Addreſſes equal the Preciſion of his divine Knowledge.

The peculiar Uſefulneſs of Salt for ſeaſoning, to corrode and dry-up the putrid Parts, and to preſerve the ſound, is too well known in a natural Way, to be enlarged on; equally ſo is its Alluſion in a moral one. — Light diſpels the Darkneſs of the World, equally as the Light of Knowledge and the Goſpel, drives from before it the Miſts of Ignorance and Error. — And, a City ſet on an Hill, which cannot be hid, plainly alludes to the conſpicuous Conduct of his Diſciples & Succeſſors, on whom the Eyes of the World would be always fixed, & conſequently the Proportion of whoſe Conduct, Teaching, and Manner of Life would be as openly judged of, and their Building, of what Materials ſoever it was, aſcertained in the World.

"Ye are the Salt of the Earth." "Ye are the Light of the World." "A City ſet on an Hill, cannot be hid."

ſeverance, He concludes with, — "What I ſay unto You, I ſay unto ALL."

Under this Prelude I ſhall treat on the Words in the following Order,

Firſt, I ſhall ſhow the great Importance of Character in general. "Salt is good." — And then,

II. Exemplify it under the different Portraits of the real Chriſtian, — the true Patriot, — the faithful Friend, the Man of Honour, — Honeſty, — and Moderation; and their Oppoſites. — And,

Firſt, Of the great Importance of Character in general.

Of all the External Advantages, and Comforts of human Life, there are none more valuable, or of greater Importance to a Man, eſpecially to thoſe whoſe Birth, Fortune, or Education, whoſe Office or Employment, (*) ſets them eminently or officially in the

(*) It cannot be foreign here, to take-notice of a Miſconduct in many, which ought entirely to be put a Stop to, for the Benefit and Safety of Society; [viz.] "The giving Characters in Favour of ſuch as are unworthy of them." — And behold the Vanity of the Plea made to excuſe ſuch baſe Prevarication! "They are loath that ſuch ſhould be prevented, in their Way, the Means of a Livelihood." Now,

It would be ſufficient, One would imagine, only to note the Wickedneſs and Miſchief of Falſehood and Double-dealing, which every Man of common Underſtanding muſt know to be as prejudicial to Society, as it is contrary to Truth.

the World, than a good Name. – It is "above the Price of the Gold of Ophir" – and "better than precious Ointment" – and in many Cases than even Life itself; for, in Proportion to Men's Credit, Esteem and Character in the World, their Weight and Influence, and Power to do themselves and others Good will be greater and more extensive. – It enlarges our Capacity of doing-good both in publick and private Life: It enforces and adds Weight to our Counsel and Advice – It gives us a more ready Access in our Applications;

But let these good-natured friendly Complyances give-way, for a little, to the Dictates of Reason.

Is it not much better that such should be suppressed; and, by such Suppression, oblige them & others to a better Conduct, as knowing Then that no Character, (upon which their Livelihood depends) could be had without it, than that the Public should be betrayed, who may admit them, on this Account, into their Houses and Confidence, thereby giving them a further Opportunity to embezzle or betray?

Surely no Man would like This from another: The Rule therefore is, that we should not do it to another. Is it not much better that such should be rejected, and by such Rejection, make-way for the honest and industrious to do both themselves and their Masters, Service.

Qualem commendes etiam atque etiam adspice, ne mox
Incutiunt aliena tibi Peccata Pudorem.

To give them no Character at all, is, to all Intents and Purposes, the same as giving them a bad One: and to give them a good Character upon the Whole, when they do not deserve it, is to be easy and good-natured at the Expence of Truth and Justice.

See Knox's Essays, No. 85. On the Importance of a good Character, only with Respect to Interest.

cations; and facilitates the Execution of our Designs. In a Word, In all the Ways of Commerce & Dealing in the World, it is of unspeakable Use and Importance to us. (*) – It were endless to enumerate all the Advantages of a good Reputation, for there is scarce any Action of our Lives, how commendable soever in itself, to which a good Reputation, does not give a better Grace. — But,

II. I am to confirm this from Particulars, under the different Portraits of the real Christian, – the true Patriot, – the faithful Friend, – the Man of Honour, – Honesty, – and Moderation. — And,

First, The real Christian. And here, Who is there that reads this Character, as drawn up by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, as containing in it "Whatsoever things are true, – whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, – whatsoever things are pure, – whatsoever things are lovely, – whatsoever things are of good Report, – as having all Virtue, and therefore all Praise," but must be in Love with it?

In whatever Light we view it, whether in Relation to God, – to Ourselves, – or as it affects our Neighbour

(*) *Ut Lux Solis cætera reddit splendida; Ità, bona Famæ Vitæ Ornamentum.* In all the Affairs of the World, so much Reputation is really so much Power. Serm. CCXXI.

bour, it is "good." For, the real Chriſtian is no leſs exemplary for his Piety and Devotion to the former, than for Moderation in himſelf, and Juſtice, Meekneſs, and Benevolence to the latter; and conſequently, at the ſame Time that he benefits himſelf, is beloved both of God, and Man; and is bleſſed, careſſed, and aſſiſted by all; whilſt, on the other Hand, the Man that "hath loſt his Savour" as to theſe things, is not only not beneficial to himſelf, but is curſed of God, and alſo (as being "good for nothing") is caſt out, and trodden underfoot of Men, and periſhes forever." No Honour binds him; nor Favours conciliate his Affections, further than his own Intereſt balances the Account. Devoid of every valuable Principle he can ſhew-forth the Effects of nothing that is good or praiſe-worthy: for his whole Root being Rottenneſs, both his Bud and Bloſſom muſt go up as the Morning Dew.

He who believes not in God, is not himſelf to be believed in, neither his Word, nor his Oath are to be taken. Honour is to him but a Chimera, a Cloak more artfully and effectually to deceive: and, in fact, ſuch a One can ſhew no Reaſon why he ſhould be permitted to live in a World, the Bonds of whoſe Society he diſowns, and endeavours univerſally to diſſolve. (*) Many

(*) See this more largely in Vol. vii. Page 41, &c.

Many are the Motives to this ſacred Character, and equally the Diſſuaſives from its Oppoſite, beſides what is ſaid of the Amiableneſs of the One, and the Deformity of the Other, upon the higher Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, and the Refinements of it, and Bleſſings attending it, both in this World, and a better: and which muſt ſet theſe oppoſite Characters in a much ſtronger Light. — But,

Secondly, The ſecond Particular to be conſidered is that of the true Patriot, and its Oppoſite, the inſidious Betrayer of his Country.

If Men could but reflect and conſider the great and generous Seeds implanted in them, that might (if rightly cultivated) enoble their Lives, and make their Virtues venerable to Futurity, how could they, without Pain, perceive the univerſal Degeneracy from That Publick-ſpirit, which ought to be (next to Religion) the principal Motive of all our Actions?

The Greeks and Romans were wiſe enough to keep-up this great Incentive to Public Exertion.

With them it was impoſſible to be in Eſteem, without being a Patriot. All Gallantry had its firſt Source from hence; and to want a Warmth for the Publick Welfare, was a Defect ſo exceeding mean, baſe and

degenerate, that he who was guilty of it, had no Pretence to either Honour or Manhood. (*) In a Word,

There is a Diſpoſition of Mind, called Public-Spirit, or Love of our Country, which good Men in all Ages have exerted; – which prudent Men have encouraged, by endeavouring to make it faſhionable and honourable; – which ingenious Men have conſecrated to Immortality, by their Praiſes of it; – which few Men, (how profligate ſoever,) have had the Imprudence to cenſure openly; – and which Ridicule, (that ſpares nothing,) hath been almoſt afraid to attack: being approved of God, and good and beneficial to Men.

Indeed, Public-ſpirit, - heroic Zeal, - Love of Liberty, - and the other Political Duties, do, above all others, recommend thoſe who practiſe them, to the Admiration and Homage of Mankind; becauſe, as they are the Offspring of the nobleſt Minds, ſo are they the Parents of the greateſt Bleſſings to Society.

How diſſolute, therefore, and execrable muſt their Character

(*) When the univerſal Bent of a People ſeems diverted from a Senſe of the common Good and Glory, it looks like a Fatality, or Criſis, of impending Ruin. Thoſe that contribute none of their Labour or Fortune to the Publick, may be ſaid to deſert the Community.

See Knox's Eſſays, No. 21. On the peculiar Propriety of exciting perſonal Merit and manly Virtue, in Times of publick Diſtreſs and Difficulty: And alſo No. 23. On the Propriety of adorning Life and ſerving Society by laudible Exertion.

Character be, who, (inſtead of ſacrificing their Intereſt and Ambition,) will not part with the leaſt Degree of either, to preſerve inviolate, and to entail, in full Vigour, to their Poſterity, ſuch a glorious Conſtitution as we poſſeſs, the Labour of ſo many Ages, and the Price of ſo much Blood, and Treaſure, but would rather chuſe to ſacrifice it, and all their own Independency, Freedom and Dignity, to perſonal Power and ſhallow Grandeur, to any little Pageant of a King, who ſhould prefer being the Maſter of Slaves, to the being the Guardian of Free Men, and conſider himſelf as the Proprietor, not the Father of his People.

But, as Words cannot expreſs the Selfiſhneſs and Servility of theſe Men; ſo neither can they, the manly and heroic Spirit of ſuch, (if any ſuch there are,) as have Virtue enough ſtill left to ſtem the Torrent of Corruption, and guard our ſacred Conſtitution againſt the Profligacy and Proſtitution of the Corrupters, and the corrupted.

The Publick is but One Body, and the Prince is the Head of it, ſo that whatever Member withdraws his Service from the Head, is no better than a negative Traytor to himſelf, and his Country. (*) Thirdly,

(*) We ſcarce find in any Hiſtory a Deſerter of a Truſt or Party he once adhered to, to be long proſperous, or in any eminent Eſtimation with thoſe to whom he revolts, though in the Change there may

Thirdly, The third Character propoſed, was that of the faithful Friend. In

appear evident Arguments of Reaſon and Juſtice; neither has it been in the Power or Prerogative of any human Authority, to preſerve ſuch Men from the Reproach, Jealouſy and Scandal that naturally attend on any Defection.

Let no Price nor Promiſes, therefore, bribe us to take-part with the Enemies of our Prince; Whoever wins, we are ſurely loſt; If our Prince proſper, we are proclaimed Rebels, and muſt expect the Conſequence: If the Enemy prevails, we are reckoned but as meritorious Traytors. Tho' he may like and love our Treaſon, yet he will hate and deſpiſe us, and fear us as unſafe alſo to himſelf.

Cùm Tennes *Urbem Sidonenſium Regi* Ocho *prodidiſſet, hanc Laudem, et hanc Spolia a Rege retulit*; Rex eſtimans *Tennem* non amplius utilem, eum interfecit. *Proditores Urbium ſæpè ut ipſi quidem Proditionem evadunt, ſed ab Hoſte trucidantur. Illi quidem, in primis, amabiles; at verò qui jam prodiderunt, in Odio maximè habentur. Proditor apud omnes pro Hoſte habendus eſt; nihil illis tutò credendum eſt, qui in Patriam perfidi fuêre. Ut Nemo delectatur Unguento, Odore perdito: ità, Nemo amat Proditorem Proditione exactâ. Ut ſanatis Corporis abjiciuntur Pharmaca; ità, conſummatâ Proditione, perit Gratia Proditoris.*

They, therefore, are deceived who look for any Reward for Treaſon; for, "Once a Traiter, and never after truſted."

——— ——— *Servetur ad Imum*
Qualis ab Incepto proceſſerit, et ſibi conſtet.
Mutare vel timere ſperno.

Nothing, that is not a real Crime, makes a Man ſo contemptible and little in the Eyes of the World as Inconſiſtency, eſpecially when it regards Religion or Party. In either of theſe Caſes, tho a Man perhaps does but his Duty in changing his Side, yet he not only makes himſelf hated by thoſe he left, but he is ſeldom heartily eſteemed by thoſe he comes over to. "My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change."

All

In Order to ſhow the true Value of this, we might not unaptly ſtate the true Nature of Friendſhip, - the Qualifications, - Offices, - and Advantages of it.

But this being already done at large, (*) I ſhall only ſo far touch upon theſe Points, as to juſtify the Character and Doctrine before us. And,

1ſt. That which procures Love and Friendſhip in the World, is a ſweet and obliging Temper of Mind, a lively Readineſs in doing good Offices, together with a conſtant Habit of Virtue, than which Qualifications nothing is more rarely to be found in Nature: - No Marvel, then, that where they are found, they give Credit and Eſteem to the Poſſeſſors. And,

As the Advantages of true Friendſhip lie deep, ſo there

All Trayters are Mercinaries; and whoever betrays one Maſter for Advantage, will betray another for a greater Price.

Dualus fidere Sellis. Duos Lepores ſecutus, neutrum capit.

He that trims between two Intereſts, loſes himſelf with both, when he comes to be detected, for being true to neither.

"Winnow not, therefore, with every Wind, and follow not him that goeth two Ways. Go not into every Way, for ſo doth the Sinner, hath a double Tongue. Be ſtedfaſt in thy Underſtanding, and let thy Words be the ſame."

Such as are Trayters to their Prince, and perjured to God, deſerve no Credit with Men. — Never therefore ſell Honour to purchaſe Treaſon. A ſecure and happy Subjection is more to be eſteemed than a dangerous and factious Liberty.

(*) Vol. x. Page 137. Serm. CCXXI.

there is great Danger & Hazard in contracting Friendſhip, for Fear of falling into the Hands of Flatterers and Deceivers.

It is therefore a Buſineſs of no ſmall Importance, and which requires no ordinary Circumſpection, ſo to be able to know a Flatterer in every Shape he aſſumes, that the counterfeit Reſemblance, ſome Time or other, bring not true Friendſhip itſelf into Suſpicion and Diſrepute.

The Friend whom Virtue and Religion hath gained, who is not fixed by Gain or Pleaſure, him Extremity doth but faſten: (*) like a well-poiſed Arch, he ſtands the firmer, by how much more Weight he bears.

We muſt, therefore, uſe our beſt Senſe and Judgment in the Choice of our Friends, grow acquainted with the Character they bear in the World, before we take them into our Boſom, and by the beſt Pre-knowledge we can gather from Obſervation and Report, prevent the Danger of being ſurprized with Treachery, for, there is nothing more troubleſome in human Society than the Diſappointment of Truſt, and failing of Friends; for, beſides the Diſorder that it works in our own Affairs, it is commonly attended with a conſequent Deficiency in our Performances to others. The Leaning upon a broken Reed gives both a Fall and a Wound; ſuch is a falſe Friend, who, after

(*) *Amicus certus in Re incertâ cernitur.* Pro-

Profeſſions of Love and real good Offices, either with-draws himſelf from us, or betrays us. (*)

Suitably to this, and to the common Senſe and Sentiments of Mankind, the Son of Sirach, (who well underſtood the Laws and Punctilios of Friendſhip,) very properly makes his Obſervation and Admonition. "Whoſo betrayeth Secrets, looſeth his Credit, and ſhall never find a Friend to his Mind." – "Love thy Friend, and be faithful to him: but if thou betrayeſt his Secrets, follow no more after him; for, as One letteth a Bird out of his Hand, ſo haſt thou let thy Friend go, and ſhalt not get him again. Follow after him no more, for he is too far off; he is as a Roe eſcaped out of the Snare" – "As for a Wound, it may be bound up, and after Reviling there may be a Reconciliation; but he that betrayeth Secrets is without Hope," – "If thou haſt opened thy Mouth againſt thy Friend, fear not, for there may be a Reconciliation; except for Upbraiding, or Pride, or diſcloſing of Secrets;

(*) The Miſtake of a Friend for an Enemy, or of an Enemy for a Friend, is one of the moſt pernicious Errors of a juſt Man's Life; for there is Judgment, Good-nature, Generoſity, Juſtice, common Prudence, and *All* at Stake. Nothing can be more diſobliging to a Friend, on the one Hand; or more prejudicial to ourſelves, on the other. For,

An open Foe may prove a Curſe;
But a pretended Friend is worſe.

Charity, however, bids us hope and think the beſt, provided that, at the ſame Time, we ſecure the main Chance. Serm. CCXXI.

crets, or a treacherous Word; for, for these things every Friend will depart." — But further,

The next Character to be considered, is, "The Man of Honour."

Truth is the Bond of Union and the Basis of all human Happiness. Without this Virtue there is no Reliance upon Language — no Confidence in Friendship, nor Security even in Promises and Oaths. Ingenuity and Candor possess the most powerful Charm, they bespeak universal Favour, and carry an Apology for almost every Failing; it is the most compendious Wisdom, and also an excellent Instrument for the speedy Dispatch of Business; it creates Confidence in those with whom we have to deal; saves the Labour of many Inquiries, and brings things to an Issue in few Words. — Indeed,

Considering the mutual Benefits that we enjoy, as Members of Society, we cannot but delight to pursue the Means that convey those Benefits to us. And, nothing does more effectually convey them, than the Trust and Confidence that is put in us. And, Nothing confirms that Trust and Confidence more, than a good Reputution. And, nothing more certainly gives us a good Reputution, than the Experience of our Honesty and Integrity.

Even

Even those that have too little Regard to Truth and Sincerity in their own Practice, are yet constrained to admire it in others, and are best satisfied in themselves, when they deal with an honest and Faithful Man, and commit their most important Concerns to the Charge of him that will not betray them.

If we pass from the necessary Affairs of Life to the innocent Pleasures of our ordinary Conversation, these derive all their Sweetness from their Sincerity: — when we are wearied with the Business of the Day, & are willing to refresh ourselves with the Conversation of our Friends & Acquaintance; how agreeable & delightful is the Refreshment, when there is no Suspicion of Falsehood, no Danger of opening our Minds too far, nor Fear of being taken in the Snares of perfidious Men!

Indeed, If a Man were only to deal in the World for a DAY, and should never have Occasion more to converse with Mankind, nor ever more need their good Opinion, or good Word, it were THEN no great Matter, (we speak as to the Concernments of the World,) if a Man spent his Reputation all at once; But, if he be to continue in the World, and would have the Advantage of Reputation whilst he is in it, let him make use of Truth and Sincerity in all his Words and Actions: for nothing but This will carry a Man through: All other will fail, but This will

hold out to the End. — It is the Obſervation of Solomon. "The Lip of Truth ſhall be eſtabliſhed forever; but a lying Tongue is but for a Moment,"

But further, — From the Man of Honour, proceed we to "the Man of Honeſty;" which, in fact, is but a Part and Appendage of ſame Character.

And here, — It is proverbially ſaid, that "Honeſty is the beſt Policy;" and doubtleſs it is moſt generally found to be true. For,

Thoſe Vices which pretend to be of Advantage to us, when clearly inſpected, and all Circumſtances duly conſidered, will be found to be quite otherwiſe: among theſe we may reckon that of Fraud & Diſhoneſty; which, if we look well into them, will be found either not to bring the Advantages they pretend to, or that the Inconveniences which attend them are as great or greater than the Advantages they produce; or elſe that the Practice of the oppoſite Virtues would be of much greater Advantage to us. All this is really true in the Caſe before us, and from which Solomon draws this juſt and happy Concluſion, that "better is a Little which the Righteous hath, than great Revenues without Right;" becauſe, though but a Little, yet it will be more durable, and there is no Trouble with it; and beſides this, what Honour and Credit doth it derive

derive to us, what Intereſt, what Peace and good Order to the World, and to every Member in particular in it! It is ſuitable to that "Law in our Mind," which every Man feels in ſome Degree; and of Courſe raiſes a Complacency and Pleaſure reſulting from the Congruity and Conſiſtency of our Actions and Judgments. "It is a Joy to the Juſt to do Judgment." It creates a Delight which is natural and rational, and the Teſtimony of our own Regard to it is Part of the Reward of it.

The Honeſt Man, whatever his Circumſtances be, cannot be contemptible; rather, how is he careſſed, though even in Poverty! and, "if in Poverty, how much more in Riches? and is preferred before his unrighteous Neighbour. Whereas,

The Man of oppoſite Character, who is guilty of Theft and Diſhoneſty, tho even in leſſer Matters, yet how eaſily is he accounted of? for, being once known to be guilty hereof, he will always be deemed guilty of the ſame, if not, of ſtill greater Offences; (*) and conſequently, he will be avoided by all Men.

They

(*) *Qui ſemel furatus, — Semper fur vocatur.*

When Infamy hath mark'd a Race,
To them deſcends a long Diſgrace.
And tho, like harmleſs Sheep they feed,
Honeſt in Thought, in Word, and Deed,
The Change will never be believ'd.
A loſt good Name is ne'er retriev'd.

They therefore, of whoſe Guilt the Law can take little or no Notice, muſt not think to eſcape without a heavy and bitter Self-condemnation, from Time to Time; nor uſually the bad Opinion of the World: which laſt will frequently do them more Harm, than any unfair Practices will do them good. (*)

This eſpecially holds with the MIDDLE and LOWER, which is by far the greater, Part of Mankind. Their Livelihood depends chiefly on their Character; and their Character depends on their Honeſty. This will make amends for many other Defects, but nothing will make amends for the Want of this.

Under this of Honeſty in our Actions, we may not unaptly add Honeſty of Thought and Intention, with its Oppoſite, Hypocriſy and Deceit.

Sincerity is the higheſt Commendation, and the beſt Character, which can be given of a Man. It is the ſolid Foundation, the Heart and Soul of all Piety, Virtue, and Goodneſs.

In Scripture it is ſpoken of as the Sum and Comprehenſion of all Religion. It is not ſo properly a ſingle Virtue, as the Life and Soul of all other Graces and

(*) *Ut ſublato Fundamento perit Ædificium; ità, à Fraude tollitur Fides perit Commercium. Horret quiſque adire Locum, ubi læſus eſt. Ictus Piſcator ſapit.* Serm. CCXXI

and Virtues; without which, what Shew of Goodneſs ſoever a Man may make, he is yet unſound and rotten at the Heart.

The Hypocrite, indeed, whilſt it laſts, hath one Advantage by his artificial Garb, that he can more ſecurely over-reach and defraud others by his Shew of Godlineſs, while Men are not aware of his Diſſimulation; but this commonly doth not laſt long, and only ſerves for a few Turns: when it is diſcovered, the Man is loſt and undone for ever, and no One regards him.

Every new Attempt to regain his Credit will but confirm the general Perſuaſion, and render him ſtill more odious and deteſtable. — But,

Laſtly, "Of the Man of Moderation, and its Oppoſite, the Prodigal and extravagant Spendthrift."

Who knows not that Health, that Fortune, that perſonal Elegance, the Peace and Order of Families, & all the Comfort and Honour of After-ages, are the Sacrifices which Men make, who are led, by delicate Appetite and extravagant Profligacy, to a riotous Courſe of Life! — Whereas,

The prudent Perſon thrives in his Temporal Affairs. It is for this Reaſon, becauſe he often balances his Accounts; examines his Gains, and his Loſſes; ſees what Proportion they bear to each other;

conſiders where his Conduct may have been faulty in any Reſpect, and how for the future to rectify it.

On the other Hand; — He who hath involved himſelf in Debt by a long Courſe of Extravagance and Prodigality, finds himſelf utterly unable to ſtate his Accounts. The Occaſion of it is clear; – They become every Day more perplext and intricate, being a mere Stranger at Home, and ignorant of his domeſtick Concerns.

The prudent Perſon perſeveres in his Affairs unembaraſſed; He has no Incentives to mean Artifices, or evaſive Subterfuges; but living thus always within Bounds, his Retroſpection is without Regret, as his Proſpect is without Terror. He is able, at any Time, to retire from the World, ſtep into his Cloſet, and reflect with Pleaſure on his paſt Conduct.

But, to change the Scene, — What are the Fruits of Luxury, Senſuality and Intemperance – of Waſte, Profuſion and Extravagance, but Want and Poverty and a Train of Conſequences no leſs fatal to the Fortune than Luxury Senſuality and Intemperance are to the Health? How miſerable muſt the Situation of ſuch a One be; His Mind cannot be at Eaſe.

"Without are Aſperſions" and Reproaches, and "within Fear and Confuſion." View him in all his

Con-

Connexions, and we ſhall find him equally miſerable, looking in vain for That Reſpect which he hath forfeited by his Conduct.

If Praiſe be juſtly eſtimated by the Character of thoſe from whom it is received, little Satisfaction will be given to the Spendthrift by the Encomiums which he purchaſes. For who are they that animate him in his Purſuits, but ſuch, as are as thoughtleſs and abandoned as himſelf, unacquainted with all on which the Wiſdom of Nations has impreſſed the Stamp of Excellence, and devoid alike of Knowledge and Virtue? By whom is his Profuſion praiſed, but by Wretches who conſider him as ſubſervient to their Purpoſes, SYRENS, that entice him to Shipwreck, and GIANTS that are gaping to devour him?

Every Man, whoſe Knowledge or whoſe Virtue can give Value to his Opinion, looks with Scorn and Pity (neither of which can afford much Gratification to Pride) on him, whom the Panders of Luxury have drawn into the Circle of their Influence, and whom he ſees parcelled out among the different Miniſters of Folly, and about to be torn to Peices by them, who at once rob and ridicule him, and who are ſecretly triumphing over his Weakneſs, when they preſent new Incitements to his Appetite, and heighten his Deſire by counterfeited Applauſe. Such is the Praiſe that

is purchaſed by Prodigality. Even when it is yet not diſcovered to be falſe, it is the Praiſe only of thoſe whom it is reproachful to pleaſe, and whoſe Sincerity is corrupted by their Intereſt; – Men who live by the Riots they encourage, and who know that whenever their Pupils grow wiſe, they ſhall loſe their Power. Yet with ſuch Flatteries, if they could laſt, might the Cravings of Vanity, which is ſeldom very delicate, be ſatisfied; but the Time is always haſtening forward when this Triumph, poor as it is, ſhall vaniſh, and when thoſe who now ſurround him with Obſequiouſneſs and Compliments, fawn among his Equipage, and animate his Riots, ſhall turn upon him with Inſolence, and reproach him with the Vices promoted by themſelves.

Thus have I laid before you, in brief Accounts, the Characters propoſed, and ſhewn under each, the peculiar Aptneſs of the Text, the excellent Savour of the One, and the Unſeaſonableneſs of the Other. I have ſaid nothing of their ill Effects and Tendency with Regard to the OTHER World, and where their Conſequences will be more highly enjoyed, or ſeverely felt, will be more beneficial or prejudicial to Men as they are Obſervers or Non-obſervers in theſe things, becauſe I was to ſhew, (as the Text ſeems only to

import)

import,) their different immediate Tendencies in this World only, and which would ſet theſe oppoſite Characters in a yet ſtronger Light; and at the ſame Time that they would more firmly excite us to the One, would alſo equally diſſuade us from the Other.

Upon the Whole, — Thus is "a good Man not only ſatisfied from himſelf, (*) and protected by the World, (‡) but maintains a good Character with all; which, in every Circumſtance of Life, is of the greateſt Service to him: — He "walks worthy his Chriſtian Calling," and ſo ſecures the Favour of God; — he is true to his County, and true to his Friend, — he maintains his Honour, and Honeſty, with Moderation.

"Happy is the Man that is in ſuch a Caſe; yea, bleſſed is the Man who hath the Lord for his God."

(*) The preceeding Subject. (‡) Sermon ccxviii.

The End of the twelfth Volume.

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